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BRIDGEHEAD

BRIDGEHEAD is the first book to present clearly, in a broad and deep sense, Israel's direct relation to world Jewry, to history and to Man. And though an awareness of crisis suffuses its pages, this does not disturb its focus which is of a people behind the politics and the headlines, the communities behind the economics, an old and never-ending spiritual drama encompassing the statistics, underlying and transcending the immediate problems.

BY WALDO FRANK

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Theater

NEW YEAR'S EVE

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BRIDGEHEAD

The Drama of Israel

by **WALDO FRANK**

New York

GEORGE BRAZILLER, INC.

1957

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For
Michal and Deborah
With Their Father's Love

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FOREWORD

THERE HAVE BEEN many books on Israel: on its politics, its economy, its geography, its agriculture, its problems in the Arab world and in our own. These are all timely topics. But this is not primarily a topical book, nor is timeliness its preponderant purpose. It is true that I was commissioned to go to the Middle East to write a series of articles for a group of Spanish language newspapers, rang-

ing from New York, Los Angeles and San Antonio southward throughout Latin America; and doubtless the articles would have been neither proposed nor published, had they not been timely. But when they were written and published, I realized that I had something other to say: something more direct in the sense of Israel's relation, and the Jews', with history and with man. Therefore, this book. It employs the facts that went into the articles. Its manifest form may still be somewhat that of a reporter visiting a land and a people. And doubtless the awareness of world-crisis suffuses its pages, as it suffuses the daily lives of the Israelis. But the focus and, I hope, the reach are different. My growing consciousness, as I absorbed my experience in Israel, was of a people behind the politics and the headlines, of the communities behind the economics, of an old and never-ending spiritual drama, suffusing the statistics, underlying and transcending the immediate problems.

The drama of a people is its portrait. However inadequate, this is a portrait of a people . . . of a nation small in the number of its members, but with a dimension of depth in human history which makes it large in weight, vast in meaning—as if its strategic geographic site were a symbol.

The book's substance, of course, includes economics, politics, relations with neighbors and world.

These are what plasm is to body. But the book's subject is a living people. And the book's justification, at least as an effort, is the dangerous fact that the notoriety and urgency of this people's political relations has obscured the truth of its being a living people.

It has been the destiny . . . which means the character . . . of the Jews, surviving within their culture, to be in crucial relation with their contemporary cultures. This was true of the Hebrews in relation with Egypt and Babylon, Greece and Rome; it was true of the Jews in Christian Europe, which could never have been born nor have developed as it has without the Jews' ideological presence. This is true also of the Arab world, which could not have thrust, with the passion of the mounted warriors of Mohammed, from desert stagnation into Europe and into Asia without crucial and fertile relation with the Jewish culture. The Jews have often been made to feel that they belong nowhere. Perhaps the cause of this is that they have belonged everywhere . . . wherever they dwelt in the Occidental world, wherever their works were known . . . yet always in a cultural form which, being strictly their own, differed from all others.

This is the paradox of Israel: their belonging within their not-belonging. This is Israel's drama;

and it is unthinkable without the participation of its neighbors who, in their cultures, have been both the Jews' heirs and their enemies: the latter through the development of the former.

Because the Zionists reject this paradox, I have never been and could not be a Zionist. By Zionist ideology, the Jews do not belong in Europe. But if, more than any other culture including the Greek, they created Europe, who with better right than the Jews belong in Europe? and in the West that Europe fathered? By Zionist ideology, the Arabs are and ever will be outsiders—however amicable and at peace. But the consanguinity of Arab and Israeli is deeper than blood, more substantial than the machines and technics of the West which today separate “modern” Israel from “feudal” Islam. For the machines of Christian Europe, as I have elsewhere shown, spring ordinally from Israel's culture as it wedded with the Greek; and the religious nationalism of the Arabs is a version . . . virulent and misguided . . . of the immanence of God in human conduct, first expressed in the Jewish Torah and today secularized in Palestine no less than in the surrounding hostile Islam. The true spirit of what separates the Jews from Christian Europe makes them the concern of Europe—and undoubtedly moved Europe and America, in the United Nations, to recognize the State of Is-

rael. The spirit of what today divides Israeli and Arab must bring them together.

And finally, the Zionist philosophers say that the Jews—all Jews—belong in Israel. To which I answer that their paradox of belonging within not-belonging applies as intensely (although the terms have changed) to their presence in Tel Aviv as to their presence in New York or Moscow.

But these, as I put them here, are fleshless questions. My hope is that my portrayal of a people gives body to an answer.

Why was I moved to draw this portrait? (It is too lean a picture to justify the claim that it is *painted*.) I think the motive was the same, finally, as that which moved me many years ago to make a portrait of Spain (*Virgin Spain*), of America Hispana (the book of that title, and the more recent *Birth of a World: Bolivar in Terms of His Peoples*); and repeatedly to make portraits of my own country (*Our America, Re-Discovery of America*, for example). Analyze this motive, and we find love and the awareness of peril. What I love in my own land, I find in peril. What I loved in Spain, in America Hispana, I found to be in peril. What we all love (love is the need to know and to share) in Israel is in peril. And the encircling threat of Arab oligarch sheikhs with their docile hordes and of the

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Powers with their craven and dishonest diplomacy is only a phase of the peril.

Israel, with its values that are so profoundly our own, is endangered primarily because of us. Here are the motives of this hurried portrait.

W. F.

Pátzcuaro, Mexico

April 1957

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ONE: FACTS

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1. GEOGRAPHY AND REVELATION

WHEN I first saw Palestine thirty years ago, I felt a beauty which seemed to me distinct from that of other lands—as the beauty of the Bible is distinct from that of other literatures, of other Scriptures. Was there a physical basis for this feeling?

At almost every point of a small and narrow space, height and depth, desert and garden, salt sea, dead sea and sweet water meet and become

accessible together; so that the mind may embrace them in an experience at once so intimate and so urgent that it becomes a message. From Mount Scopus (now a no-man's hell between the Israeli and the Jordan lines, where the buildings of the Hebrew University, the Library and the Hadassah Hospital stand abandoned); from Mount Tabor, above the once malarial valley of Ha-Emek, which the pioneers have again made to flow with milk and honey; from Mount Carmel and the Cabalist city of Safed, the view holds together the snows of Lebanese Mount Hermon, the hospitable Mediterranean sea, the snow-terraced Judean hills, the river Jordan linking the lake of Galilee with the miasmatic Dead Sea a thousand feet below the oceans—craterous and abysmal within the Sodom desert. And these ecumenical views of earth's contrasts are common; any humble height or break of a valley from Dan to Beersheba repeats them. Each soft rise of the earth, hardly deserving the name "hill," becomes justly *kfar*, a mount or mountain, because of the gamut of vision it releases, *yet binds* within humanly manageable scope.

In such vast units as Mexico, California, Egypt, the equally varied whole—and the sense of it—exceeds the eye; or, if glimpsed, appears to exclude and to overwhelm the human, making man small. Here in Palestine, wherever one is, wherever one looks, the forms and moods of earth . . . nourish-

ing, forbidding, sinister and blessed . . . are geared to man's measure—yet make that measure cosmic.

Is this the key to the aesthetic of the Bible? The humblest details, earthly and human, in its chronicles, its songs, its laws, are caught in a cosmic scale, are felt to partake naturally of a cosmic relation. Every moment, every spot, every deed in the working day of herdsmen and traders bares the vastitude of Being, because the Whole is always physically present; bares therefore by an easy transition the Hand that made it: the Hand of Genesis, which, as the Talmud notes, produces Creation anew each morning.

It seemed plausible to me that a people living within this constant revelation of the unity of earth—long before maps and the mathematics of the stars—should translate and expand their experience into a code of practice: a law of daily deed for making and for enjoying their daily bread within this vision intimate and cosmic. Here, I felt, was perhaps the psychological explanation of the 613 Commandments by which the Jews actualized the presence of God in humblest fact and act—as their strip of earth from the mountains to the seas, from the life of valleys to the death of desert, rock and poisonous water, actualized the whole of life for every eye to see.

Then I recalled how widely the legends of the Jews (only partly noted in the Bible) identified the

scenes of their Drama's unfolding with the *kfar*—the mount or lookout; as if they sensed this link of what they experienced and what they actually saw. *Mount Moriah*: where Abraham builds his altar to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son; the Gate of Paradise, the place of Adam's altar, the home of the dust from which God makes him; the bed of Jacob on the night when he dreams of the Ladder linking him with Heaven, and the site of the first Temple. *Mount Sinai*: where Moses speaks with God and receives the Torah; and to which, in the Talmudic "tournament of mountains," God gives the crown because it is "the humblest"; *Mount Nebo* (or Pisgah): where the Patriarchs are buried; where Moses looks upon the promised land that he will never enter, and where he dies and where Aaron and Miriam are buried. *Mount Carmel*: scene of Elijah's contest with Baal, and of Elisha's wonders. *Mount Tabor*: field of Sisera's defeat by Debora and Barak; mythic place of the descent of the New Jerusalem from Heaven. In Jewish legend, the plain which limits the view to its own continuance and particular scope, is captivity (Egypt, Babylon); the mountain means vision, liberation, altar, and prayer which is the prelude to action. And of course this idiom extends into the life of Christ, whose wilderness, from which he surveys the world and answers Satan, is a mountain, and who, to teach his greatest Sermon, "seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain." (Matt. 5:1).

For a thousand years the cosmic vision shone through its enactment in the Law. The Bible denies that it prevailed (what other official history is so candid?): corruption, the lethargies of institutionalized custom, the distortion of invading cultures dimmed it. But the vision was there, and the will to model from it the form of a concerted human action: in the pious humble farmer, in the Rabbis whose commentary laboriously spun the fabric of the Talmuds, in such sects as the Essenes, the Pharisees, the Judeo-Christians. Greek and Persian conquered the land. At last, the Romans overwhelmed it, lost it for the hundred Maccabaeon years, then stamped it out—it seemed to the last ember, and the Jews were driven forth after the destruction of their Temple (A.D. 70). They took their unitary and always practiced vision with them—to Babylon, to Alexandria, to the lands north and west; giving body to the converging spirit of the Greeks, giving spirit to the body of Rome—until Rome created Europe.

Even the land changed. The limestone rocks of the Judean hills had been covered with loam sustaining the forests, guarding the rains. The loam corroded into waste, the trees that were not cut down died of thirst, the terraced gardens perished. Valleys such as Sharon and Jezreel, Galilee down to the Jordan and beyond, which had fed from three to five millions of men¹ with their wheat and

¹ This is the estimate of Professor Walter Clay Lowdermilk.

wine, their fig trees and their olives, became swamps noxious with fever. The integral contours of the land, of course, remained, with its vistas of cosmic contrast from Mount Hermon to the Dead Sea and the desert Negev, where King Solomon mined and smelted copper. But this revelatory Whole, symbolized at Jerusalem's walls by the low Gehenna which became Hell, the high Gethsemane which led to Heaven, found no response in the new dwellers: Arabs, Druses, Mamelukes from Egypt, Latin Crusaders, Arabs again and Turks . . . no response to the land analogous to the virile Jewish culture. Nothing within challenged the outer chaos. The Temple was replaced by shrines to Jupiter and Venus, soon by mosques of Islam. Jerusalem itself became Aelia Capitolina. The cosmic Judean hills no longer shuddered.

The revelation of the land to the Hebrews had therefore been—not a compulsion upon the creative spirit of man, but a challenge which the Hebrews answered. At a certain conjunction, the land had “conceived,” and for two thousand years the miracle of birth was not to be repeated. Nor can there be a priori evidence that the Jews must repeat it. . . .

Meanwhile the absence of an integrative principle made Palestine a chaos. The population shrank. The land became a heap of half-ruined villages in which the dwellers passively nested, like the lizards

and the salamanders. The soil was stony, sterile, or malarial. The orthodox Jews returned to die or to await the Messiah, from whom, they believed, the vital force must come to reintegrate a people. The new political leaders were adventurers and strangers in the land, which achieved even the superficial entity of a state only under the Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders, corrupt and bloody. At last, Palestine sank by inanition into the vast and loose embrace of the Turkish empire. And when this conglomerate fell apart, it became a pawn in the game of British imperial power, a minor bastion in Britain's control of the Levant.

In growing numbers, for some centuries, the Jews had been returning. Exile throughout Europe and the Middle East had not dispersed them, for they were united by a *culture*, intricate and complete, and by the conviction that Zion would be there again. In the Diaspora, it may appear that Palestine became an abstraction, the Messiah a mere dream. Two basic facts prevented this "etherialization." The Jewish revelation of God had the concrete forms of human conduct (sedulously guided by the Talmud), and was set squarely upon a geographical locus. Moreover, it was set in time, and therefore pointed to redemption in a historical future. And this peculiar quality of Jewish revelation was shared by both the Christians and the Moslems, who therefore, despite their persecution of the Jews, cor-

roborated the essence of the culture of the Jews among them. It may, therefore, be said that the "nation," as a social unity in a specific homeland in a future time, was implicit in the Jewish Diaspora culture. Their conduct linked the Jews with God, and Palestine was the center of their conduct. And this Jewish "nationalism" was no less implicit in the attitude of Christian and of Moslem, who identified the Jews with Zion. This made the Jew a "stranger" outside Palestine and was a pretext for persecuting him. But it was no less a basic corroboration of the Jew; for without *his* history, that of both Christ and Islam vanished.

Perhaps such psychological facts help to "explain the miracle and mystery of the Jews' survival." Perhaps not. We are left with the paradox that the Jews for two thousand wandering years were nourished by the land of Zion, which they took with them everywhere and which shaped their daily deed as *concretely* as the fields and streets they worked in.

The expulsion of the Jews from Portugal and Spain increased their return to the Middle East and Palestine. Early in the sixteenth century, a group of mystic-rabbis and their students came to live upon the mountain of Safed. Here, high above Galilee, between the Lake and the Mediterranean Sea, facing Mount Tabor and the verdant valley and the

sultry Jordan that falls into the crater of the Dead Sea and Sodom, was the old unitary revelation of God's earth. And here these learned Jews strove again to build a City of Man.

Safed was, for a century, a high place. Here flourished great Cabalists and Legists: Isaac Luria, Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, Hayyim Vital, Joseph Caro. The Cabalists depended principally upon the *Book of Zohar*, a vast work compiled in Spain from ancient mysteries, while the lawyers wrought mere variations on Torah and Talmud. The forms of both their timeless intuitions and their concepts were already obsolescent. For a few years, Safed was a green shoot grafted on the trunk of a felled tree. Warfare and earthquake soon destroyed the city, but its spirit had already waned. When I saw Safed in 1927, it was a heap of half-abandoned houses responding to the ecumenical splendor of the view with dust and relics. When I saw it again, thirty years later, it was a new town teeming with recent immigrants from Yemen, Iraq, Bulgaria, Morocco. Even the memory of the Cabalists was absent. The old remnant stones were being rapidly rebuilt into modern streets. What response these new children of Palestine might make to the ancient revelation of the land, no one could say.

Already in 1927, thousands of Jews had come to Palestine, principally from the East of Europe. The orthodox crowded Jerusalem's fetid alleys and

mourned at the Wailing Wall, obeying, with head and body asway, the Talmudic command to "pray even with the bones." Or they settled in the agricultural colonies bought from the Arabs by rich Jews of Europe: the Rothschilds, Baron de Hirsch, Montefiori, often leaving the actual work to the hired *fellahin*. But the young Zionists, many of whom had come by foot from the Ukraine and the hinterlands of Turkish Europe, and who were transforming the deteriorated earth, draining, irrigating, planting, were not orthodox. These were the pilgrim-pioneers: the *Halutzim*.

I had seen their ghettos in Poland, Russia, Rumania, Austrian Galicia: the mire of their streets, the squalor of their homes. Over this dark dearth, the armies of the first World War had flailed, indiscriminately destroying as they advanced and retreated. The one relieving aspect was the conviction most of us had in the nineteen-twenties, that the worst had been done to these people. No one dreamed of Hitler. A spiritual fire burned beneath the smoke of these East-European Jews; and the culture of Israel has shown no evidence of strength greater than its persistence in that unbreathable air of persecution. Of course, the culture was stunted; of course, it frequently survived at the cost of monomania; of course, the new airs of freedom filling Europe met the East-European ghetto as a complete rejection of the old ways of life. The young Zionists, leaving that dank world to make a new one

for themselves in Palestine, turned their backs not only on their cellar-homes but on the ritual of a thousand shadowy and shabby synagogues. Their saints were Rousseau and Tolstoi, Bakhunin and Kropotkin. Their soft hands, which had plied only the needle and the pen, now dug ditches for draining the swamps, cut lumber for a house of children. If they looked without contempt on the old orthodox Jew at the Wailing Wall, it was with compassion.

Their relations with the Arabs, who vastly outnumbered them, were discreet, peaceful, yet shallow. A creed . . . the old one of the orthodox or the new one of the Enlightenment . . . always divided them. Over the fellah, who still lived in a twelfth century world, was the sheikh, whose leadership depended on the people's economic lag which he saw threatened by the modern Jew. Over the Jew the British officer of the Mandate, whose purposes would certainly not have been advanced by an Arab-Jew alliance for democratic freedom.

There were leaders in those days, in Palestine, who sensed the urgency of a creative link between Arab and Jew: such men as Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, Samuel Bergman. We shall meet them later. They were not typical. The abyss between advanced Zionist and illiterate Arab was too deep; the tasks of the Halutz, building his world and his home, were too urgent and exclusive to bridge it.

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2. THE PULSE OF A PEOPLE

AT THE CLOSE of the First World War, when Britain assumed the Mandate for Palestine, the 56,000 Jews living in the homeland were a small minority of the Arab population. Today, in truncated Palestine, without Nablus, Ramalleh, a large part of the Jordan shores, old Jerusalem down to Jericho, and Bethlehem, Hebron, Gaza—all of which belong to Jordan or to Egypt—there are 1,500,000 Jews. In

Jewish Palestine, 200,000 Arabs still live, about half in hundreds of small villages with their mosques and local sheikhs, the other half more concentratedly in Nazareth and Galilee, under a military governor. The great change, of course, is the result of the mass Arab emigration in 1948 when the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq broke into the Jewish homeland, and the Arab leaders urged the Palestinian Arabs to withdraw to safety until the massacre was over; the result also of the recent influx of Jews preponderantly from these Arab countries. Fifteen per cent of Jewish Palestine is non-Jewish. And this Palestine, drawn to the lines of battle when the Armistice was written, has become Israel, a state.

A state, to be valid, must articulate a people. The organism is the people. Its inwardness is sustained by the cellular links between its classes, its functional and territorial groups, which share the dimension of time expressed in a common history commonly remembered, a common practice and a convergence upon a common future. It must, however, like any individual organism, have also the outward dimensions of contiguity and of relations with its neighbors. There may be war between them. But even in war, and repeated war, there is basic recognition of mutual existence.

If Israel is an organism, I shall sense its rhythm

or counterpoint of rhythms: sense an inward life, not a mere reflex to imposed circumstance. If Israel is an organism, it must also have an outward life cognizable in its physical situation and in its at least potential intercourse with the life beyond its frontiers. The acts of this organic life, I repeat, may be expressed in the state. But the state is contingent on the people.

What is this people? The old orthodox, rocking and bowing over their texts, waiting to be "gathered" to the Lord, indifferent (if not hostile) to the state, which, according to them, the Messiah must establish—no mere Ben-Gurion or Weizmann . . . The children of East-European intellectuals, materialists, radicals, ignoring the name of God, and anathema to the devout . . . The Halutzim who came to build utopian communes, and who, as we shall see, have done so! . . . The bourgeois ex-citizens of Germany, Austria, Poland, who came to rebuild themselves, because they had no choice; setting up capitalistic firms, professional offices, making quick money and spending it in smart shops, luxury hotels and night clubs . . . The Oriental Jews from North Africa, Iraq, Yemen, speaking a *mélange* of Arabic and Aramaic or a medieval Spanish; steeped in a thousand years of Islam; their women illiterate and sequestered; so remote from the ways of the West that many, when they first see a bed, think it a

bomb-shelter. Soon these Orientals will be a majority of Israel's people.

Now consider the conflicting motives of these generations. There are those who came to the holy land to die. There are those who came with plans for a new life—plans shaped in Russia, Germany, England. There are the Orientals, snatched from the Middle Ages by airplane: literal flying carpets! There are the extremists of the Left who, across Islam, reach out toward the communist; the extremists of the Right (approximately balancing) who dream of a strong authoritarian Israel, broadened to include Trans-Jordan. And issuing from them all, amazingly alike, whatever their parentage and ideological background, there are the native-born—the Sabras—who think of themselves quietly, without emphasis, not as Jews, but as *Israelis*. They stare in surprise or contemptuous incomprehension at the vast literatures of their fathers, based on the assumption that it is “difficult to be a Jew” and that a God they do not know has chosen them to be chastised because He loves them!

All these disparate elements in Israel, pulsant with energy. What can make them an organism . . . a people?

The torso of Israel is an oblong body from Tel Aviv northward to beyond Haifa and Acre, eastward to Galilee and its Lake, southward to the Dead

Sea and Sodom, westward to lofty Jerusalem and down again through what is called the "corridor" of the Judean hills to the Mediterranean sea; the other half of the land's total eight thousand square miles is the Negev, still largely desert, although reclaimable by irrigation, rich in oil and minerals: Israel's "Wild West." In this oblong body are most of the collective farms and industries (*kvutza* and *kibbutz*), the cooperative villages with individually owned land and houses (*moshav*), the cities, the immigrant camps (*mahabara*) still crowded with Jews newly arrived from Yemen, Iraq and North Africa, the lush valleys of Sharon and Esdraelon, presided over by Mount Tabor, teeming with factories, farms, new towns; the steep gorges between the valleys, still largely owned by the white-hooded Arabs whose wood-ploughs and oxen and camels have not yet been replaced by tractors; the lush coastal plain south of Haifa, vibrant with traffic that recalls Southern California. Here indeed is rhythm and pulse. But one thinks of the billions of Zionist dollars poured into Palestine; of the defense work (shelters, trenches, arms) stimulated by the constant threat of the Arab nations to repeat the 1948 invasions and wipe Israel from the earth; of the Oriental Jews recently flown into the land, who need housing and food. This "busyness" of Israel could be the temporary unity of a crisis. It must be analyzed in its components before we can judge it.

Perhaps at the popular levels of feast, song and dance—in the common possession of values and of methods for fulfilling them and for defense and for sheer living, we may find an organic pulse. . . .

I arrived in Israel shortly before Passover week. This is the great holiday in which Jews, the world over, celebrate the exodus from Egypt across the Red Sea into the land allotted to them by Jehovah. Every line of the Bible is, of course, a palimpsest of meanings, which the Scribes, who finally wrote the texts as we have them, understood by already ancient tradition. The Scribes' words are actually shorthand, which the voluminous Commentaries of Meshna, Midrash, Halacha, Haggada, Responsae, Cabala, etc., "translate" into the longhand of conduct, according to the school and individual sights of each interpreter. And it is the freedom, the vast gamut of these readings which have kept Israel over-rich in ritual and almost without dogma. This flight from Egypt, ending in the bestowal of the Law upon the people and in the disappearance of Moses, the Law-giver, outside the promised land, on the barren mountain of Moab, overlooking the Dead Sea, may be read as literal history, as homiletics, as prophecy and as symbol. The state of Israel establishes only the public holiday . . . the *form*. Leavened bread is not baked. Business bows to the synagogue. But the content (legalist, devout, secular, profane) with which the form is filled is left

to each individual, to each individual collective. I note some of my impressions of this manifold Pass-over week. . . .

On my first night in Jerusalem, after my friends had left me (in order that I might rest after my long journey) I went into the streets to taste the city. Jaffa Road by day swarms with busy men and women in every dress from Broadway to Arabia. Now, as I followed it eastward, it grew in solitude and silence. I knew that at the Jaffa Gate the old city and the hostile Kingdom of Jordan began. I did not know the distance. But I assumed that barbed wire would tell me when I reached the line of danger. The stone city glowed in the dark, which sparse lamps punctuated rather than illumined. Before me (I had now been entirely alone on the street for several minutes) I grew aware of a wall without windows that appeared to jut at an acute angle into the street, not closing it. The ring of my own footsteps began to trouble me, as if they wounded the silence. Suddenly, a voice stopped me.

"Come back!" it cried. "You'll be shot."

I saw behind me, at my right, before a totally dark house but within the penumbra of a street lamp, a young man and a girl.

As I went toward them, he soberly said, in accentless English: "You're in no-man's land."

Now I could see them well, as if their friendliness

glowed. "Thank you," I said. "I expected barb-wires, or at least a sign."

"There is a sign," he chuckled. "Only at night you can't see it." He pointed to the absolute blackness beyond the jutting wall. "You might be a dead man."

He was a tall, blond fellow and he looked like a German. The girl, also blond and blue-eyed, was (I found later) a Sabra. The house before which they stood was an abandoned tenement too close for health to the hostile line cutting Jerusalem in two. Such derelict houses were not empty. New-come families from the East had settled in them. My two friends were on a regular visit here to give Hebrew and writing lessons to the women of a family of Iraqi Jews. They belonged to a group which called themselves "Line of Volunteers," who give their free evenings to such missionary tasks. They claim a further function (on which the government frowns, fearing its likeness to the arbitrary ways of "vigilantes"): taking themselves for the conscience of the people, they expose incompetence and corruption in the public services.

Through a door which completely barred the light, we went downstairs into a basement which a single dangling electric bulb revealed to be high-ceilinged, bare and damp. Along the wet walls were six beds, the iron frames without mattress, or the mattress without bedstead. We sat at a table with

the pupil-girls, who turned their docile eyes with wonder to the books, while the men and the old women stood proudly behind us. Soon there was Turkish coffee on the table, and the lesson proceeded.

The young man, born in Berlin, had been brought to Palestine as a child, but his education made him a son of the West. In physique, he could have passed for one of the Nazi youth who drove his people from their ancestral German home. The girl, reared in a kibbutz, in other clothes might have seemed a comely Polish peasant; her upbringing had brought her the socialist ideals of pre-Bolshevik Russia. The pupils, and their costumes, were of the Orient. Submissiveness was bred in them; now their new country ordered them *not* to be submissive, and they obeyed. They understood why they must learn to read and write: to become citizens of Israel, voters and soldiers. Just like their brothers, who smiled down at our studious table. Sweetly, the resilient bodies and the intelligent, unknowing eyes of the girls submitted to the negation of submission. The dominant sense I had was of relaxation. No ideology was taught; indeed there was none in this cavern-room. Israel, here, was felt *to be* a job-of-work, rather than *to have*. It had to be made livable, it had to be defended (with arms and intelligence somehow blent). This was a task not remotely romantic or deserving of heroic adjectives: a task

therefore to be done with sober casualness. Even the little cups of coffee, well sweetened, became a natural symbol: the national task must be lived, and therefore must be pleasant. One must have a good time, while one worked. Even the threat of war: one must have a good time working against it, making strength to guard against it!

Was Israel already a nation for these disparate Jews? a fatherland? a motherland? or merely a homeland? The questions did not rise in that room. I felt tenderness, seriousness and fun. Ideology was absent.

The *Histadrut* (Israel's Labor Union) was holding its annual congress just before Passover in Tel-Aviv. I went down to the opening sessions. This drive between Jerusalem and Israel's largest city, a drive the busy visitor makes many times, has become a ritual. Until the coastal plain is reached, the road zig-zags down steep stretches, whose sharp and sudden turns are the alternatives for precipice and disaster. The distance is under fifty miles; but the driver who respects his place makes it in never more than an hour and a quarter—including the start and finish in traffic-crowded streets, where speed of course is out of reach. Therefore, once in the open, he races down the steep ladder-road with his feet on the gas and relies on his brake at the instant when a drop into outer space gapes imme-

diate before us. Remonstrate with him, and he feels injured—and speeds on. When one has accepted and somewhat mastered the thrill of riding with one's heart in his throat, and death at every turn, one is ready for the message of the rocky Judean hills forever kaleidoscoping into Palestine's vast vistas: of the young trees newly planted by the millions; of the terraced gardens; of the fresh settlements; of the half-ruined Arab villages whose adobe and stone crumble back into the earth, as if the effort of distinction from soil and stone had been too great in Palestine's centuries of strife—and for the message of the corpses of cars and buses purposely left where they were murdered by the Arabs, as a memorial of the years when the Jerusalem-Tel-Aviv road was a perpetual ambush. (Just before I left Israel, night-traffic on this vital highway was again forbidden.)

The Histadrut is, I believe, unique among the labor federations of the world, for it began, not as a group of unions previously existing, but as an *a priori* whole. The unitary vision, the embracing principle, came first. Not far from 50 per cent of Israel's inhabitants are Histadrut members: housewives and other self-employed workers belong; and children with regular economic tasks; and artists, writers, scientists and teachers. It is, moreover, a capitalist *employer*; for instance, it owns a majority of the shares of the one working oil-well in the Negev, and is responsible for 40 per cent of the

land's industrial investments. It has its own theater, the *Ohel*, which takes the form of a kibbutz; it has expansive cultural departments, including an office of Arab integration; and of course a network of welfare and insurance services. Ideologically it springs from a modern socialism, mixed not only with the strict syndicalism of the collectives, the cooperative individualism of the villagers, *moshavim*, but also with capitalist enterprises, both domestic and foreign. Before the Republic, under the Mandate, the Histadrut could justly perhaps have been called a proto-state; and most of Israel's political leaders, including President Ben Tzvi and Premier Ben-Gurion, were Histadrut chieftains. To-day it is a power within the state, separate and often dissident, arousing dialectical tensions which stimulate both. Its critics ironically refer to its great new modern quarters in Tel-Aviv as "the Kremlin." Ben-Gurion's three-hour speech, which I heard at this first session, was devoted in part to explaining how and why the Histadrut must progressively withdraw from the pseudo-state functions which were natural under the Mandate and which now have no right to continue. An equal part of his enormous address dealt with the spiritual and cultural crisis of the new immigration, which according to Ben-Gurion lacked the vision and values of the old pioneers, and threatened a general deterioration from within.

The Congress sat in the Habbima Theater, which

is owned by its company of actors who live in apartments that are also part of the collective. It is a modern structure, circular with bold stone columns facing a square. Opposite, a new concert hall nears completion; close by is the handsome social center of the *ZOA*, the Zionist Organization of America; and the square issues into the tree-lined vista of Rothschild Boulevard. The auditorium, paneled in olive, despite its size breathes intimate warmth. But the thousands of delegates packing the seats, the stage, the wings, the theater portico and the cool Mediterranean air of the street, formed a lava of hot permanence. Most of them were men and women of forty or more; many were members of the Knesset, Israel's House of Representatives; on the stage, in the front rows and at the presidium table, were the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, his Cabinet ministers, the high Histadrut officials.

The massive bodies making one immovable body reminded me of Seventh Avenue, New York, at lunch hour, when the garment workers coagulate and condense, forming an impenetrable substance upon the pavements. These workers also have come, for the most part, from Eastern Europe. They spoke Yiddish long before they learned Hebrew. Their daily bread from childhood has likewise been struggle and trouble. The New York garment workers give the impression of a spiritual stagnancy; they have pushed through life and somehow ended in a

cul-de-sac: the values of a capitalist country seeking above all to hold on to what it's got, and confusing progress with more, ever more of the same commodities. These Israelis, equally pushing and equally hard to push, have an inner fluency which derives from the incredible promise and the dread hazards of their nation. They seem lucid enough about the perils facing Israel. But they were not worried. They were engaged in history . . . and felt it. Literally, this fact, despite its mortal dangers, made them "at ease in Zion."

As, from my seat on the platform, I looked on them, it was their *mouths* that impressed me. Bitter, strong mouths, whose sensuality had been tempered and transfigured, whose sensitivity had not been numbed. The mouths marked them off from the Seventh Avenue brothers. These Israelis were the same men . . . but luckier. I thought of Israel's first Politicians, all members of a party of social justice: the Prophets. From what kind of mouth came the words of Amos, of Hosea and Isaiah? Was I right in thinking that the grim and bitter tenderness of these delegates' mouths belonged to Jews whose social consciousness had moved them to create a nation?

The agenda of this pre-Passover congress of workers was a tough scrutiny of Israeli's economic and defensive problems . . . of the substance of the land. These men and women, like all Israelis, observed the Sabbath, went to a Rabbi for marriage or di-

vorce, and were preparing now to celebrate the Passover *Seder*. Yet I doubt if, among the millions of words spoken that week in the Habbima Theater, the names Jehovah, Torah, Messiah, were so much as mentioned.

There is a district in Jerusalem called Meah She'arim (near the domed Abyssinian Church with its Lion of Judah) where the orthodox and the Hassidim—they of the flowing earlocks and the dancing prayers—live in byways that will soon be as airless and crowded as those of the old city, near the Wailing Wall, destroyed in 1948 by the Arabs. Here are streets, piously chained off on the Sabbath, lest the profane Israelis defile it with their cars. One orthodox group even refuses to pay taxes, since the present state was not founded by the Messiah (they are not molested). The innumerable “houses of study” of this deliberate ghetto within free Israel are drab, gray, with a touch of cheap finery only at the altar where the Scrolls are kept. The one splendor is that of *The Book of Splendor*, the Cabalist *Zohar*. But the music of the sung prayers, of the Law and the Legend, is older than the Gregorian chants, which it inspired. It flames, smoulders, sleeps, according to the temper of the text. It is ordinate with the meaning of the specific part of Scripture, of a specific rule of conduct; and this interpretation in turn links the man who prays with

Cosmos. This is the nature of the splendor in these gray homes of worship,

I noted that most of the men in the orthodox gymnasia of study were old. Many were robust, pink-cheeked, dark-bearded, but the mean age of them all was surely above sixty! Where were the young men? The women, of course, were not to be seen in their curtained recess behind or above the room. But very young boys, wearing the orthodox *yarmulke* (skull-cap) wandered aimlessly among their grandsires, giving no heed to prayer and song, at ease and absorbed in their own quiet amusements. I noted also that every worshiper was going his own way. They sat, rocking over their mumbled text; they rose, rocking more strenuously as they sang a prayer within the fringed *talith*, the shawl that hid all but eyes and mouth; they turned toward the altar, where some were busy with the Scrolls of the Law; others turned in other directions. Were they unmindful of one another? And continuously they kept on coming, going, or dropped their prayer to chat with some newcomer on what was obviously some individual and mundane matter. But was the effect of all this disorder? As I sat, strangely upheld and nourished in a melodious chaos as if by an invisible, organic food (for these old men, who almost never sang together, had good voices), I realized the unison in this apparent clamor—a unison so deep, strong, wholly experienced, that it permitted

the widest variants of freedom in those who dwelt within it. Even as men, women, children, harvesting a field, may perform as many acts as they are individuals, while they share the place, the time, the future yield, these variously busied old men shared their God and His message for them. By contrast, the services of the Catholic and Protestant churches and of the Reformed Synagogue, which simulates the Protestant, are regimented formulae clamped upon discontinuous lives. These mellowed men had a Zion all about and within them; and although their prayers registered anguish, they were at ease within them. The variety of their motions and words was the casual sum of the motions of an integrated body. Even the meanderings of the little boys, giving no heed as they wound in and out among the men, and utterly unheeded by the men, wove into the union and symbolized its relaxation. I saw the faces of the boys; I watched the childlike faces of the men, even the most ancient; and they belonged together. Here were mouths neither bitter nor grim. The certainty of prayer had kept them, within their protective beards, sweet and fragile.

I encountered no Reformed Temples in Israel; I am not sure they exist. But in Tel-Aviv I visited synagogues of the prosperous bourgeois: ample and sumptuous affairs in which the service tended toward the rationalized sequence of the Protestant churches. The mean age of the practisant here was

less; one saw the business and professional leaders of the community at the height of their day. Heads were still covered, although more frequently by conventional felt hats than the traditional *yarmulke*. The ancestral shawl and the phylacteries were usually absent. The altar cupboard of the Scrolls was gold and silver.

I heard one cantor in a synagogue of this type, whose voice is more magnificent than any opera tenor's. How Lebel Glanz gushed forth the passion of Israel in roulades, trills, tonal filigrees and cadenzas! But the passion, one felt, was musical. Within its expression was an inward human doubt . . . or lack . . . overcompensated by rococo flamboyance. Why did I keep thinking of the Metropolitan, the Milan Scala? Mar Glanz sang better, or had a better theme. But he was singing a music at its terminal end: elaborate, magnificent, yet bounded. The unprofessional singer in the humble house of study sang a music that was the statement of human experience. The modern age doomed its form; but while it lasted, it was timeless. . . .

For my *Seder* (the dramatic feast that opens the Passover) I chose a large kibbutz, one of the oldest: *Giv'at Brenner*, whose members (they grow citrus fruits and can them for export) are typical liberal socialists, non-devout by conviction. We drove south from Tel-Aviv through the mild March evening, past

the cellars of Rishon-le-Zion, whose wines hold the subtle fragrance and vigor of just such nights, past the Weizmann Institute, deep in verdure, symbol of Israel's effort to marry modern mind with the earth. The large, crudely built, unheated shed, where the Seder was to be held, was cold. It is the "sports-palace" of the kibbutz. Now it was jammed to the walls with tables and benches set criss-cross in long rows. At the center, toward which the long tables converged, was a raised dais for an orchestra of about twenty, all kibbutz members; and close to one of the walls stood a higher, larger platform for the dancers. The two thousand celebrants were workers, and they were dressed like workers. Wine and the coarse food, above all the talk, soon warmed the draughty barn. At each plate, on which was a cut of carp and a medley of raw vegetables and cold potatoes, presided over by a rosy bottle, lay the Haggadah . . . the legendary tale of the Passover; and the best bookmen of Paris or Munich would not have disdained it, yet it was designed and printed in the kibbutz shops.

A young man in dungarees and a bare shirt got up and made a sign to the orchestra. It began an introductory music, composed by a kibbutz member: a piece patently influenced by the modern idioms of Europe, yet able, and with a suggestion of the hard soil, the tough sinew, the sobriety of the commune. The leader turned from the players

toward the packed rows of diners, made a slight motion with one hand, and the two thousand men, women and children at the tables poured forth the traditional Haggadah music. The transition from one idiom to the other, the timing, the control, were perfect, as were the modulated crescendos and diminuendos. There was no clumsiness, no lag. A choir of twenty trained voices could not have bettered the precision and the pace. Had this multitudinous two thousand rehearsed? I doubt it. Their collective act could not have come about, without an inward structure of which every daily deed of their community was the rehearsal. Perhaps they did not know the Haggadah words; the little booklet at each place was there for that. But the music, *and their singing it together*, welled from a certainty within them.

So the complex show continued. Children recited the proverbial questions and sang. Youths danced . . . in the largely Russian idiom of the dance, but with a naïve freshness. The crowd was the chorus and the source. These were Jews of the "Enlightenment"—quite without sympathy for Talmud-Torah. They sustained the Bible drama with an inward rhythm unimpeded (seemingly unconscious) as the breath and blood of their bodies.

Is there the pulse of organic life in these haphazard and disparate events? the missionary "Line

of Volunteers," the Histadrut mouths, the childlike Hassidim, the chromatic roulades of the bourgeois cantor, the spontaneous art of the kibbutz? And in others I have not named: the Oriental Jews in their shoddy camps, learning in Aramaic to think their way with modern machines; the *Hapoel ha Mizrachi*, whose ceremony I witnessed in a basement gym that might have been in Indiana: the girls in slacks, the boys singing the ancestral strains with the breeze of cheer-leaders at a ball game—these youths both orthodox and radical?

They are all Jews who share a history which is religion, a religion which is history. Their stresses and accents differ. Some reject the religion—as if they could! and the history it formed—as if it had not formed them. All, whatever their convictions, have been nurtured by a method of worship which is work, and instinctively approach work as the true method of worship. Most reject the orthodox ritual, as not fitting their world. Many have already learned that the aggressive empiricism of their socialist fathers is as defective as the Talmudries of their forefathers: the latter, because of insufficient contact with the functional bodies of our day, the former because shallow and without knowledge of the depths of man's nature. All, even if unaware, seek a method of living which will express their worshipful love of life. The method is not yet even described in theory. Perhaps it will not be described,

until after it is lived. Perhaps it will never have the chance to be lived. The search is already blood and body. . . .

It began to dawn on me how the culture of the Jews, which is based on the proposition that history is ethics, leads to the making of a nation. So strong has been this impulse to transform worship into action, individual spirit into social body, that for two thousand years the Jews were a nation even *without a land*, which is the physical factor indispensable in all other historic cases for the making and preserving of a nation. In the most scattered and dark Diaspora days, this unifying principle kept the nation alive, kept it separate from and in touch with the other nations among which it was dispersed. The promise of the land, even without the land, had been enough, in some form, to sustain the entelechy. With the land itself now given, the nation-making impulse of the Israelis rises to a pitch of passion. . . .

3. FROM OLD PALESTINE TO KIBBUTZ

NORTHEAST from Acre, our road climbed Mount Ha'ari, Israel's second highest peak. Again, in our eyes, the archetypical whole land: Mediterranean to Lake Kinneret and the aternal Jordan, David's Mount Tabor and Lebanese Mount Hermon, the gorge between the valleys of Sharon and Esdraelon, with Megiddo, scene of man's last legendary Armageddon—a sum of geographical contrasts for the eye

to hold, which only hundreds or thousands of miles could equal elsewhere on earth.

Here, in a little cleft and fold of the lush land, lies Peki'in, an ancient village distinguished from a hundred others only by its claim to an unbroken residence of Jews since the destruction of the Second Temple.

Peki'in is typical of old Palestine. Most of its inhabitants are Arabs, Moslem or Christian, and Druses, who jealously preserve their own religion. As one climbs the dirt road, the stone houses only half emerge from the rank verdure. The road becomes rough rock. The dwellings, crude extractions of the basic earth, stone and adobe, are also a return to it. Half-ruined walls, in-fallen roofs, represent the dual motion of man's emergency and nature's reprisal: ascent, descent. . . . It seems as right for this village to be a heap of shards slowly dissolving in soil as to be slowly rising. There are disordered gardens, and the children shine like the wild flowers among the rocks. Young girls stand at the side of the road, displaying baskets they have woven for sale. They do not hold them up, they do not speak; merely they stand there, passive . . . not even expectant. And this too is typical.

When the Temple fell, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, according to the legend two stone fragments, one representing the Ark, one a Menorah, were carried from the ruins to Peki'in, where they

were cemented in the synagogue walls. The synagogue has been rebuilt; the two tablets are still there. The old Jew who showed them to us is a child of the two Jewish families who claim continuous residence in Peki'in since the fall of the Temple. He acknowledged our presence with a wry nod, and refused to talk. We offered him money for the preservation of his synagogue. He said, on this holy day he could not touch money, but if we would place it under the edge of a piece of tapestry on a table, he would condescend to instruct us. He was a very little, very ancient man, bundled in a gray wool cloak that made him look like a parchment scroll of Torah. With no teeth in his jaw to intercede, his chin had grown up toward his nose, so that when he spoke, his nose worked like the lever of a hand-pump. Once he began to talk, there was no stopping him. And I surreptitiously noted that the Israeli pounds we had slipped under the tapestry were gone. The old fraud had somehow examined them before judging how much to tell us.

This is old Palestine, and plenty of it remains. It typifies the 102 Arab villages with 120,000 dwellers; the 20,000 Bedouins in their black camel-hair tents, the Arab town communities (Nazareth, Jaffa, Acre) and the villages where the Druses dominate. In number and population, it is still a larger part of the whole than the cooperative villages (*moshavim* and *moshvei*) and the collective communes (*kib-*

butzim and *kvutzot*). But the proneness of the former is to remain as they are and to crumble; the propensity of the latter is to change and to grow.

The kibbutzim, of which in the official count of 1955 there are 223 with less than 80,000 members, play a greater and more conspicuous role in Israel than their numbers suggest. The earliest were strictly communal: no glass of tea was served, except in the common dining hall; the children from birth lived in their own quarters where the mothers came to nurse them. The distinction was sharp between the kibbutz and the now more numerous moshav whose families have individual houses, individual kitchens, separate (but equal) plots of land, cooperating only in the village government, the use of farm machinery and general market and purchase problems. But in the fifty years since the first was founded, the kibbutz has become liberalized; the distinction from the cooperative moshav steadily lessens. In most of the kibbutzim today, the family can entertain friends at its own tea table. In some, the child remains with the parents for four or five years; in others, it returns to the family after the nursing years; in still others, it never leaves the parents. Kibbutz members may now have regular work outside the settlement (several Cabinet ministers, and also Ben-Gurion, belong to a kibbutz). In most, the members receive a monthly "allowance" which they may spend as they wish:

on trips to town, on clothes, a new radio, books, although each settlement has its library.

A contrary trend is manifest in the moshav, as modern agronomy and economic planning stress the need of instruments (technical and social) of collective collaboration. Both types of settlement, moreover, grow from agriculture toward industry and the practice of such arts as ceramics, furniture-making. If Israel is permitted to live, and to breathe beyond the deleterious strait jacket of endemic defense from hostile neighbors, there will come a diversified unity to all the communes and cooperatives . . . agricultural, industrial, educational, aesthetic.

I spent a few days in the mother-kibbutz of them all: *Degania*, founded in 1909 by East-European socialists at the point of the Jordan valley where the river leaves the lake of Galilee. Here, we are 700 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. East rise the sterile hills of Trans-Jordan. South, 1300 feet below sea level, is the Dead Sea, crater of infernal beauty, from whose chemical waters, verdigris and opalescent, the state now smelts vast stores of life-giving potash. There, overlooked by the mineral mountains of Moab (where Moses died), whose gyrant shapes inspired the legend of Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt, were the cities of sin, Sodom and Gomorrha; and it is within the logic of

Jewish thought that the Haggadda equated sin with such desolation.

But Degania, unlike Lot's wife, looks forward. Its date palms, banana groves and grapefruit orchards stand in rationalized rows. Its dwellings are in the shade of ordered cypress and in the scent of flowers. The early kibbutz was gaunt and grim, and its pioneers were doctrinaires. I recall my visits in 1927. Only the children's house had screens against the pestilential insects; we sat in a bare hall eating one common dish within the clouds of flies. Degania, prospering, has broadened. Lawns, lined with tropical blooms, are the children's playground—and the parade-ground of a peacock vainly strutting his splendor. Paved paths, roofed by spreading trees and palms, lead to new two-storey apartments with outside stairs and balconies, and within, on pastel-colored walls, are paintings: the work of local artists or colored reproductions (Van Gogh is a favorite).

In 1948, Degania's fortieth year, the Arabs came across the end of the Lake with tanks and were repulsed by homemade hand grenades. One of the captured tanks still stands where the Deganians stopped it, at the gate: a monument of ever-present peril. In 1922, Aaron David Gordon died there, an old man with a square white beard like a sail. He had been nearly fifty when he left Russia to fulfill, in his own life, his religion of labor as worship (*avoda*). He wrote:

A living culture embraces the whole of life. All that life creates for the necessities of life is culture: to dig the earth, to build houses and roads; such labor, such activity, is culture. The order, manner, form, in which such things are done forms a national culture. All that the workers feel, do and seek when they work or rest and the relations that arise from the life within them . . . this is the creator of civilization. From this the higher forms: science, art, philosophy, poetry, religion, are nourished. But these aspects of culture—the only ones which those among us who speak of culture ever mention—are the cream at the top. Who can produce cream, if he lacks milk? Or shall we skim our cream from the milk of the stranger?

They have built a house, *Beth Gordon*, to recall their saintly fellow-member: a gleaming white structure whose tower rises above the palms and cypress, giving a view of the Lake, the Jordan valley, the hostile Jordan mountains. It serves for military reconnaissance. And the house itself is a museum of all the flora and fauna of the district, and a library of ten thousand works on agronomy. Gordon's "house of science" in this remote commune deep below the level of the sea, and the Israelis who built this practicable monument: books and a tower, sum up perhaps to a symbol, if one does not forget that these are farmers . . . earthy farmers with the coarse hands of the laborer, in which somehow sensitivity has been nurtured.

I was the guest in Degania of two of the original founders, who have spent their lives there: Joseph

and Miriam Baratz. The woman, weatherbeaten, work-gnarled, motherly, silent and inscrutable, seemed a far truer Eve than the pretty and sensual Eves of the Renaissance painters. Her man, volatile, confident, devoted, made me think less of Adam than of a Jacob, ready by the sweat of his brow and by the aid of shrewdness, to win the patrimony he believes in. The background of this patriarchal pair helped me to sense them: the lush, Eden-like garden of their tropical land, the encompassing badlands.

Their daughter, Yona, who was my guide, is a salty, intelligent woman born at Degania and unconsciously taking it as a self-sufficient cosmos. We talked of God; she said she had no use for such nonsense. I asked her what she meant; she named the Talmudists, wrapped in their musty texts. I tried to explain what God could mean. "Of course!" she said. We had leaped a semantic hurdle. As we walked and talked, visiting the various activities of the kibbutz, one music underlay them all: the voices and play of children.

Yona took me on a visit to Degania B, an offshoot kibbutz (its birthday, 1920) from the parent (now Degania A) which felt it was growing too large. This is a more modern place, with a more daring (not quite successful) architecture. The common dining hall of Degania A is of the traditional puritan epoch which regarded food as a necessity like the fueling of a machine. But Degania B is building a new hall

resplendent with electric stoves and the latest refrigeration.

We drank tea with friends on the private porch of a smart bungalow, and it occurred to me that I might have been on the porch of a villa in some modestly comfortable suburb of Rio de Janeiro. Until I realized that these people owned no property except their personal belongings and their books; that whatever they earned went into a common store in return for the commune's promise to feed and house them, to care for them in illness and to bury them when they died. They received no wage, only a little monthly "spending money," all alike. They received clothes according to their needs. This was all so startlingly different from Rio de Janeiro—or Westchester County—that the common, casual humanity of my hosts seemed almost incredible. And then I looked at the military shelters before my eyes as we chatted (children romping over them), and at the trenches marring the lawn . . . preparations against a new assault by the Arabs. Yes, quite different!

The arrangements for the children were distinct in these two related communes. In Degania A, the youngsters live with their parents. In Degania B, they occupy the children's house until school age. The matter is the subject of endless argument throughout Israel, with fewer appeals to Freud than one might imagine. At least, there is no problem of

baby-sitters; no problem of lonely children in the country and of children playing in the gutters of the city. Perhaps, in place of all this, the kibbutz child has the problem of finding solitude—if he needs it.

That Friday night, as we left the communal hall after food and talk and song, we read on the bulletin board that Saturday (the Sabbath day of rest, in which no labor shall be done) would be devoted to work on the trenches. I watched them next morning: men and women and boys and girls digging the lateral and divergent ditches which 1948 had taught them as the best design for shooting the invader without being shot. They joked, laughed, sang, as they labored. At first I was shocked—although not at this “profanation” of the Sabbath. Did they jest as they dug because they were thoughtless? insensitive? without imagination? Not at all. War for these people was a threat against their life, and they knew it. But life comes first, and *is here*. And life is good.

The members of a kibbutz, sharing so much, share a doctrine and belong usually to one political party. This is reasonable. The orthodox Mizrachi would be ill at ease in a community whose prophets are Tolstoi and Gordon, or who think nothing of digging trenches on the Sabbath. Members of the Mapai, the reigning moderate socialist group¹ might

¹ to which belong 40 of the 120 Knesset members, nine of the seventeen Cabinet ministers, the Premier and the President of the Republic.

have trouble, in the intimacy of kibbutz life, with followers of an extremist party. These all have settlements of their own. And the Heirut are growing: the authoritarian nationalists who would have Israel take all Palestine at once, before the alternative (as they construe it) of annihilation. For they disclaim confidence equally in Russia, America, and Britain. Israel, they insist, lives in a world without friends, and they look with dismay on Ben-Gurion's postponement of war while the Arabs daily grow stronger.

I visited *Me'vuot Betar*, a Heirut kvutza in the Jerusalem corridor at the very edge of the bristling line with Jordan. It was a day of heavy rains, miring the roads; as we climbed, the bare limestone and corroded earth seemed impervious to human labor, even if the sun shone. Crude cabins stood on stilts, so the sudden floods would not take along the human habitations. A lonely tractor was terracing the steep hillside. Over its brow, our guide let us lean on a crude battlement of stone, although he warned us that we were visible to the Arabs, barely a minute's walk below us. Each cabin, we knew, was a little fortress. Our guide, like most of the members of this commune, was a Latin-American. His gaunt head and body, and his burning eyes, made me think of a saint in a painting by El Greco.

I asked political questions. How, if Palestine was the scene of a power struggle between Britain,

France, the United States and Russia; and if it was supported by American dollars, and was both member and ward of the United Nations, could it act as the Heirut recommended? Perhaps Israel had no strong friends in the world, but it was not alone. That tractor, this rank of lumber soon to be a chicken-house, proved it. The answers I got convinced me that what these heroic young zealots truly loved was the *idea* of their self-sufficiency. To nurture it, they had banded together, shared the hard life of pioneers and faced the Jordan guns. As "politicians," they were in the lineage (both Hebrew and Hispanic) which equated statescraft with prophecy. In truth, they were poets. But they had cause, perhaps, to believe in miracles. If in 1948 the Jews of Palestine had obeyed exclusively their reason, when the armies of forty-five million Arabs assaulted them from each frontier while the world looked on, would they have dared to proclaim the Republic?

In Jerusalem, I had long talks with a former member of the "Sternist Gang," as the respectable called it. This group of young men and women, in the last years of the Mandate, deliberately practiced terrorism against the British. Their theory was that the assassination of selected individuals in high places and the occasional bombing of a public building (such as the wing of the King David Hotel which

housed the British Jerusalem Administration) was more effective . . . more economical of lives . . . than a war of open battles. (And who can say they were wrong, either in premise or conclusion?)

My friend was a tall, lean Sabra, tense and nervous, brilliant and steeped in Western culture. Pain had seethed his face, like a fire. (He had God knows what blood upon his hands!) He might have been the brother of the leader in *Me'vuot Betar*, whose ideology he hated. For my ex-Sternist was a man of the extreme Left—which means of course that he despised the communists. He outlined for me what he considered the major sins of the present Administration: its links with American capitalism, with bourgeois world-Jewry; its ambiguous truckling with the imperialism of Britain. Against the *Mapam*, who condone Russia while they flirt with the West, he was equally bitter. What did he suggest? A hand to the Arab proletariat, but a hand first cleansed of contact with the capitalist powers. How was this to begin? With repudiation of Israel's political and financial bondage. And if the result of this were to expose Israel, utterly alone, to the greeds of Arab nationalism (since the Arab peoples followed their power-craving leaders) . . . to possible starvation and probable annihilation? These were risks, my poet-terrorist allowed. Perhaps he was thinking of his own risks, when he practiced terror. This young man had aspects of nobility and of lucidity. But he was self-absorbed. And the elements of this "self"

he had not scrutinized—hence his nervousness. The youths of the Heirut kvutza also had aspects of nobility, also were self-absorbed. Their theories were for *them*, not the world; nourished *their* self-satisfaction.

For a third exhibit, let us go north and east of Haifa, close to the Lebanon frontier, whose hostile hills confront us, as we turn off the hard highway into a dirt road. In the last days of the Arab war, the Israelis had won this western part of Galilee, which, by the United Nations partition plan, would have gone to the Arabs if the Arabs had not attacked. To consolidate it in Israel, settlements were needed. A group of eighty young Americans joined forty Israelis whose commune had been destroyed to found *Geshir Haziv*, today a predominantly American kvutza. The communal dining hall, colorful and clean, resembles a California cafeteria (without the cashier and the tickets). The children's quarters, gay with crayons and cretonne curtains and the best educational equipment, resembles a progressive school blessed by John Dewey. The residential bungalows, shared at night by the children, reveal the latest record-releases and the popular American books. Why are these Americans in Israel? According to a member who took us around¹

¹ Murray Weingarten, whose book *Life in a Kibbutz* (Reconstructionist Press, 1955) is an accurate text, although a little dull in style and not subtle of insight.

they are all high-school or university graduates in such fields as sociology, economics, education, agriculture and geology. Many served in the American and Canadian armies during the War, and most had a year of intense agricultural training before they came to Israel. Although the majority came from deliberate Jewish homes, a significant number were Jewish in name only. I shall not try to analyze here the motives of Americans in a kibbutz, and how they differ from those of other immigrations. This had best come later. But I found at once a quality in these members that related them with all the others. These young men and women also had need of a dominant *absorption*. American life with its infinitude of attractions, scattered and superficial and external (as the selling motive must be to the potential buyer), had failed to absorb them. War absorbed them; Israel's drama, in tune with a residual Jewish culture, absorbed them. Hard physical work and the presence of peril, sealed their attention. They were absorbed. And self-absorption is the tonal key of all the communes I saw, mature Degania included.

Let us analyze the meanings of this.

The kibbutz that survives becomes a collective individual. It shares many psychological traits with the child. It is egocentric, self-absorbed. These are norms of the travail of growth toward maturity. I

am of course not calling the *functions* of the kibbutz childlike; I am not referring to its agriculture, industry, technics; but to the spiritual state of the men and women workers. I call them a collective individual, because the content of their mind, however intellectual, and of their actions, however necessary, is held to a matrix which is insulate and "selfish" in the way of normal childhood. When these processes find organic place in the world of existence, when the self discovers and develops its share of the Cosmic, the *individual* becomes a *person*. I found in Israel collective individuals in splendid and various profusion. I do not believe that I encountered collective persons. In such a settlement as that of the *Heirut* Rightists, the solipsism of immaturity was patent. It existed no less in Degania and in the American kibbutz, although here the ideological material was broader, theoretically closer to the universal.

This insulate self-absorption is an imperative for the child. He must refer the whole world, including what he loves, to his own appetites, for it is these that feed him. But unless the transformation from individual to person comes, the process degenerates; self-absorption (however sophisticated) becomes blindness; and blindness is peril.

The actual condition of Israel is a paradox. Constant danger, the threat of death, generates energy. The group, large and small, draws power from the

sense of the solemn need of its work as national defender. And its activity produces a euphoria. Perspective is difficult in the intensity of awareness. A fixation could conceivably arise from the necessity of the kibbutz work and of similar communal groupings.

Self-absorption, self-sufficiency . . . stimulated by Israel's constant state of crisis . . . could disarm Israel, deprive it of the imaginative judgment with which it must face its crisis. Thus absorption could become exclusion; self-sufficiency the dearth of perspective and of intellectual resource. Blindly, in defending itself, Israel at its outpost (which must be its antennae of perception) could grow rigid.

These are problems which will unfold as we proceed. We must never forget that the dialectics of growth always posit the possibility of its stoppage; the dialectics of life always deploy the possibility of death.

There are childlike aspects in Israel today, and these precisely are the harbingers of maturity and greatness. Childhood is heroic and beautiful, because its fulfillment demands its death and transfiguration.

4. THE ARAB

MANY YEARS AGO I crossed the Atlas mountains south of Algiers, bound for an oasis in the Desert. Our French army *camion* stopped at a village to refuel, and I stood in the cold, windy square (it was winter) smoking a cigarette. As my thoughts wandered, my attention slowly converged on a group of Arab youths. They were looking at me and laughing at something they saw. What could it be? My atten-

tion recoiled to myself. The embers of my cigarette had blown to the shoulder of my shaggy overcoat, which was aflame. It had not occurred to these boys to warn me. They watched, delighted, the progress of my conflagration. And when I stomped the fire out with my hand, they turned away (the show was over) with a smile, as if to thank me.

On this last visit to Israel, I wandered, one warm spring morning, through the still preponderantly Arab streets of Jaffa. The men, lords of the household—while their women worked—emerged in considerable number from the dark cellar cafés, where they had crouched all winter over their water-pipes and coffee, to enjoy the mild sun. They smoked their narghilas, squatting, and they amused themselves with games. I watched a couple of old fellows playing dominoes. The pieces were the regular black bone oblongs, precisely like our own (the set might have been American) ; and the rules were the same. The marked difference was that these players placed the pieces, not at right or straight angles, but akimbo, at various acute angles, which built on the board a forever shifting shape of arabesque.

These trival incidents reveal much about the Arab. Western boys enjoy a show; they may have a low-degree resentment against foreigners; but they would instinctively, or in obedience to a social code, have warned me that I was on fire. The humanitarian motive would have triumphed over the

aesthetic. And when the Westerners play dominoes, a sense of efficient order places the pieces "square" where they belong.

This predominant aesthetic impulse of the Arab has its ethical correspondence. The Arab is not his brother's keeper. The grim desert life insists that the strong look after themselves; and this is rationalized to the conviction that "Allah disposes." Among the Bedouins, base of Arab culture, the first food goes to the man; then his women are fed; the children eat what is left or forage for themselves. The famous hospitality of the Arab does not refute this. The stranger is sacred while he is in the Arab's tent, because he is part of the ritual of the home whose purity, for aesthetic reasons, must not be blemished. The host, who offers food and drink and shelter, as concomitants of the beauty of his home, will feel no contradiction if, an hour later, he meets the voyager in the open and needs to kill him.

Humane regard for the outsider is not natural for man. Therefore in the child of the Judaeo-Christian culture, there is perpetual inward conflict between ideal and instinct. This conflict makes for insecurity and unrest, which in turn heightens the need of stability. Therefore, when the Westerner plays dominoes, he makes the proper geometric angles, whereas the Arab is free to indulge his decorative fancy; and for the Westerner a man in

trouble on the road constitutes a situation to be changed, for the Arab a spectacle to be enjoyed.

The character of the aesthetic motive is to shape designs from materials *as they are*; the trait of the ethical is not to take materials as one finds them, but to *change* them. Once it was established, the Arab culture was predominantly aesthetic. The Jew in his overriding ethicism represents the dynamic West which aims to change both man and nature: the former by social revolution, the latter by science.

This is not the place to analyze the fierce force of Islam, which challenged the Graeco-Roman world and menaced Europe before Europe was born. Islam broadened and deepened, as it slowed down: both its mysticism and its natural science rivaled those of the Medieval West. But the former (Sufism) was largely Persian the latter (Ibn Tufail and Averroes) largely Spanish. To equate the Arab Koran, as a unitary vision of man in Cosmos and of Cosmos in man, with the Jewish Testaments or the Upanishads or the great Greek writings is nonsense. The ultimate values of Islam were pragmatic. And this meant stagnation; for it is a law (ignored by Marxist and liberal alike) that when men aim exclusively for empirical power, they shall lose it. The Arab, as the Jew and Christian found him, was a man and a society that had subsided because their too accessible goals had been achieved. But let history change these goals, as history is doing, inde-

pendently of the Arab will, and Arab passivity again vanishes. There are indeed striking analogues between the bases, both ideological and social, of Islam and communism.¹

The waters of the Yarkon river, falling west from the hills of Juda and Samaria and wasting in the Mediterranean Sea, have already been partly captured east of Tel-Aviv and piped south into the Negev, transforming desert into garden. But among the new settlements of Israelis in the Negev, there are still Bedouins; and the Bedouin is the essential Arab. We visited a sheikh on his lands not far from Beersheba. His name is Suleima n El-Husseil. As we left the hard road, we saw the black camel-hide tents that house his wives, allegedly thirty-nine of them, including a recently acquired German. One woman peered at us through the tent aperture: this was as close as we got to the sheikh's domestic domain. On higher ground, where goats and camels grazed, stood a Cadillac limousine at the door of a stone house, where he received us in a long room adorned with pictures of Roosevelt and Churchill.

The sheikh is an upright, stalwart man of seventy, over six foot in height. Under his keen eyes, the slightly pouched skin is ruddy. The mouth is a cool line of resolution; and his handshake, firm and warm, articulates his natural attitude of possession.

¹ I first pointed out some of these concordances in *Dawn in Russia* (1932).

He greets us, indeed, as if we were envoys of a foreign power with whom for the moment the relation is peace, despite the implicit understanding that the natural bond between strangers is war. As we taste the inevitable coffee, he converses casually and humorously with us . . . about the weather, automobiles, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, whom he has met and admires. The sheikh's robustness is not typical of the Arab world. Vast numbers of Arabs, in perpetual dearth, are diseased and weak. Nor is his sheikh-hood a small replica of the great Arab politician: Nasser, for instance. It is too naïve; one might say that it is innocent. The acutely measuring eyes have a twinkle in them, as if Suleiman knew he was playing a game which reality might break up at any hour. But while it lasts, he enjoys it, and when we (in the habitual Western hurry) set aside our coffee-cups to leave, I feel that he is sorry.

The position of the ruler of Abu-Ghosh is very different. This Arab village crouches in the Judean hills, in the Jerusalem corridor, not far from the high city. At the base of its single crumbling street is a Benedictine monastery, built like a fort by the Crusaders and perhaps the best medieval architecture in the country. At its peak is another monastery, a flamboyant modern affair topped by a huge statue of the Virgin with the infant Christ in her arms. The surrounding country is lush with new-planted leaf . . . from eucalyptus to banana

. . . and with modern settlements—and even more with Biblical reminiscence. Here is Kiryat-Yearim, David's "town of forests," where once the Ark rested: now a children's village with its normal school whose young training teachers from every Jewry in the world are as verdant and fragrant as their gardens, which are tended by the tiny orphans. Here is also the Kibbutz, Ma'ale Hahamisha, named after the five youths whom the Arabs shot while they were planting trees.

We had lunch at Ma'ale Hahamisha, and while I ate the coarse food I sensed again, as in every settlement I saw, the introversion, the self-absorption, as if a door had been shut on this enclosure of fertility and good purpose, making the place a womb or a cell, according to the trend of one's interpretation.

The kibbutz and the Arab village of Abu-Ghosh across the way seemed impervious to one another. The sheikh's son, a very modern chap who goes to the movies and reads *Life*, showed us the village: walls and façades half ruined, rank vegetation bursting the cisterns and the once-paved street, women and children emergent like the verdure from the stones and the earth. Then he took us into a cavernous room to meet his august father. The coffee was superb; true *moka*, I believe, for this village is rumored to engage in prosperous smuggling, and in older days its trade was to take toll

from the pilgrims on the road to Jerusalem from Jaffa.

During the Mandate years, the Arabs in Palestine increased. High wages paid by the Jews attracted them from Syria and Egypt, where the poverty is appalling; the services of such institutions as Hadassah, in which they shared, saved their sick and their infants. Half a million Arabs (five sevenths of the total Arab population) abandoned Israel from 1947 to 1949, and are still refugees, growing by natural increment, in the idle camps of Egypt and Jordan.

Why and how they left can be disputed by no honest man.

The British Mandate forces embarked from Haifa. The regular armies of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, with volunteers from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, invaded the Jewish homeland. The leaders openly announced what they intended to do. Said one, over the radio: "The Jews cannot be regarded as a nation, like the Americans or the Chinese; they are highway robbers to whom the international rules of war do not apply." Said another (Abd ar Rahman Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League): "this will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre."¹

¹ Quoted from J. R. Carlson, *From Cairo to Damascus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951).

Jewish settlements were destroyed to the last man. The Jewish quarter in Jerusalem was razed, with its synagogues. Daily, over the air, came the command of the Arab leaders to their Palestinian brothers to fly to safety until the "cleansing process" was done, when the Arabs could return to their fields *and to the Jewish fields and cities* that would be vacant for them.

The Israelis also spoke to the Palestinian Arabs; urged them to remain quietly in their homes, which would be respected. But the Arab peasants, the Arab sheikhs and judicial and religious leaders, listened to the Arabs. This was natural enough. They fled, leaving their tools and their coffee-urns behind them. The "massacre," they were told, would be finished in a fortnight or at most a month; and they believed it.

Now came the incredible news of Jewish victories. Thousands more rushed away, convinced that the Israelis would visit upon them the murder the Arab leaders had promised the Israelis. And there were reprisals against the Arabs. The Israelis, not less human than the enemy, in terror and anger were fighting for their lives. But the atrocities were not official and were few in number. The Arabs who had remained and who bowed to the new state were on the whole decently handled. They constituted, nevertheless, particularly in centers like Nazareth where they had no chance to flee, a

potential "fifth column" whose injury the new government insured itself against by limiting their right to travel and by denying them the civil procedures of the rest of the country. This is the basis of the accusation that Arabs in Israel today—although represented in the Knesset—are "second-class citizens."

Meanwhile, the lands and the houses of the half-million Arabs who had fled did not remain empty. Parallel with the invasion of Palestine by the Arab armies, the Jews of the Arab nations were persecuted and in some cases expelled. Nearly as many Oriental Jews came into Israel as there were Arabs who left. Israel's narrow frontiers were unconditionally opened to every Jew, rich or poor, young or old, sick or sound. But nearly ninety thousand Arabs did return to their old homes; and at one time Israel offered to reabsorb another hundred thousand. To readmit the whole half-million had become impossible: psychologically, because of the war; physically, because of the urgent influx of homeless Jews; politically, because it would have been suicide for the new state. Repeatedly, Israel has offered to collaborate in the resettlement of the refugee Arabs; resettlement problems of far greater dimension have been solved in the past decades in Europe, and Araby's lands are both immense and empty. The Arab chiefs have preferred to let their unfortunate brethren rot in the camps of exile, for

obvious reasons: their presence fortifies the Arab thesis that the Jews are robbers and usurpers—and the bills are paid by the United Nations.

Of course, the refugee, naked and idle in his festering camp, is a victim. He cannot be expected to understand the European history of the Jew, which brought him, first in gradual small streams, then in flood, to Palestine. He knows nothing of European anti-Semitism, nothing of the Jews' perennial hunger for this holy land; and if he understood, he could not be expected to assume the burdens of a European gentile-Jewish problem. From the perspective of his wounded life, the Jewish presence in Palestine, rising through a half-hundred years, is "invasion"—even if the Jews did pay for their every acre. The Arab refugee is a victim of a base political game played by his own leaders who urged him to leave his home for a few weeks while the Jews were swept away—a game of power in which he has always been a pawn. And he has not learned of the democratic method for taking the game over. For a thousand years the Palestinian Arab has been the victim of warring masters—of whom the Jews, overwhelmed and propelled by their own tragic troubles, were certainly the kindest. The Arab victim is worthy of compassion. His erring interpretation of events beyond his knowledge and control makes him a creature of tragedy.

The Israeli must know this. He is right not to destroy his own vulnerable world by letting the Arab refugees return (soon they will have increased to a million). But he must know the tragedy, and understand it.

Knowledge requires contact. And in an accelerant vicious circle, this contact and this knowledge between Arab and Israeli becomes more difficult. The Israelis are outraged by the refusal of the Arab governments to acknowledge their existence and their right to exist. They must understand that this phobia issues from centuries of Arab exploitation by the West, with whom the Arabs identify the Jews, not without reason. The Arabs must be made to understand by the weight of the peoples of the world that the Israelis have the right to exist, and that the history . . . the destiny . . . which has focused their existence on a narrow strip of land in Palestine, must be acknowledged and accepted. Israel must learn to live within the Arab world; and the first step in this learning is the acknowledgment that it must be learned. The Arab must learn that the West, now that it has been politically banished, represents values which he needs and of which Israel is the closest agent.

“Obviously,” Martin Buber wrote, “the original meaning of the Hebrew verb *to know* is *to be in direct contact with*.” And how is this to come, with hate fanned among the Arab people by the shame

of the lost war and the hope of "winning the next round"? No one today has the answer. This is certain: the attitude of understanding contact must be nourished. From it, the occasion will come . . . who knows when or where? Among the intellectuals of Cairo? among the Christian Arabs of Lebanon? among the engineers of Syria and Jordan compelled by the need of water to cooperate with the Israelis? It can come, however secretly, at first, and humbly. For the Hindus are right, who say: "A change of attitude is magic."

When we meet Israel's leaders, we shall find a few among them who recognize the imperative—if Israel is to survive, even without war—of close Arab-Israeli understanding. They are not the most popular leaders. The present posture of most Israelis is comprehensible. They have made a welfare state on their ancestral land, reclaimed by their own resources and labor. They have taken not one *dunam* without paying for it with gold, until war and invasion and flight emptied the space and immutably changed the situation. Let the Arabs therefore discuss every problem of co-existence from the premise of Israel's existence: this is the logic of the average Israeli today, when he thinks of the Arab. It is good logic, but it is not enough.

It is not enough, because the destiny of the Jew is so inextricably interwoven with the worlds, historic and experiential, of the gentile, Christian

and Moslem, that no linear rationale can compass, explain or direct it: cosmic vision is needed, and cosmic vision transcends the "practical" and transforms it. The Israeli in his mastery of Western technics feels his superior position to the Arab. It is not enough. Alone, it is fatal. Let him master the insights of his own religion, which created Christianity and preserved the Jew. Only with these insights can he hope to walk his maze of daily and deadly peril.

I recall a sunny day when a friend from Haifa took me motoring with his family through Western Galilee. I felt again the ecumenical essence of the lovely landscape with its unison of sea, mountain, valley and abyss blending with the spirit of this cultivated family of ex-American Israelis. We passed an Arab woman on the road, bearing a heavy earthen pot on her head. My friend's small son asked: "Papa, why doesn't she use her arms to carry the jar, as we do?" The father chuckled and replied: "She might as well use her head to carry; she has no better use for it."

This was an educated man, a liberal, a professor in one of Israel's great schools. He did not dream that the attitude he was forming in his son toward the Arabs was lethal as a bomb—and led to bombs. . . .

5. CITIES OF ISRAEL

ARTUR GLICKSON, architect and urban planner, drove me to a settlement near Tel-Aviv. "I want you to see," he said, "how our new towns come into being." We passed through ancient Ramleh, a Romanesque church of the Crusaders rising from its embattled vaults to a slim Arab minaret. We saw high-ceilinged halls, once feudal, now housing a lumber yard, or the "seconds" (not good enough

for Woolworth's) from a dumped American market. Palestine, I was reminded, has always been the crossroads of the wills of conflicting civilizations since it created its own.

The settlement Glickson wanted me to see had been a temporary immigrant camp a few years ago, of tin huts patched with the sides of boxes and pasteboard, scattered in a field with a stream meandering through it. The men had gotten regular jobs, on the roads, in nearby factories; the women and their children became friends. They wanted to stay where they were. They tacked plywood walls, or cemented new ones, on their cabins; made porches, moved in furniture, tore down the unsightly tin fronts and rebuilt. A big house joined from the material of abandoned huts became a general store. Cement blocks rose into a hall for the movies and town meetings. The ensemble in the field, that blazed with wild anemones, was still ugly and disordered. But in a few years, said Glickson, every outward trace of the original camp would, by an unplanned, organic process, vanish.

At the other extreme from spontaneity is the unborn market-town of Kiryath Gath, which in a few years will supply the needs of Lachich. Lachich is a site a little larger than metropolitan Paris, under the hills of hostile Hebron, just north of the Negev, where Israel is narrow between Egypt's Gaza strip and Jordan. Empty, Lachich could not

stop invading armies from the south, east and west. Developed, it will be a bastion and will give work to thousands of the new immigrants. The Technion experts have studied the soil and divided it into sections: part is perfect for a particular wheat, part is good for cotton and sugar-beets (here factories will rise), part is for oranges and vineyards. A year ago, Lachich was empty. Already, variant types of moshav and kibbutz have been planted there and are at work. The railroad station, the industrial housing, the details of the central city—the whole “composition” is complete; all that remains is to “play it.”

A variant of spontaneity and coherence is Petach-Tiqva, a city which was once the country's oldest agricultural settlement (*moshav*), begun by Jerusalem Jews in 1878. Around the original orange groves a knot of diversified industry has grown. But the 40,000 citizens have kept their town a garden. Every street has trees, usually eucalyptus, meeting the citrus and bananas. The town center is an open square spaced with modern pavillions where the authorities have their bureaus. The noxious swamps against which the founders had to fight are gone and forgotten. Outside the city limits is a chaste modern structure in a garden, dedicated to the youth who fell in the Arab war. It has the inevitable lecture-hall; and when I was there a local artist, Yechiel Krise, was exhibiting his paintings.

Their idiom, like that of the new architecture, was what might be called "international modern," meaning principally France and its neighbors. Neither original nor distinguished. But I noted in these pictures a quality of *airiness*, as if the winds even of doctrine blowing through Israel tasted of young leaf. The tonality of the whole town is verdure.

Tel-Aviv, Israel's biggest city, with a population (including the suburbs) of about 400,000, is a huge improvization. Some reasonably prosperous Jews of Jaffa, not satisfied with their living quarters in the crumbling Arab town, bought the sand-dunes a few miles to the north and, with the help of the National Jewish Fund, drove their wells and built their homes. When I first saw it in 1927, Tel-Aviv, already eighteen years old, was a crass and noisy infant. Along Herzl Street, running north between the sea and the sand, the jerry-built houses had already far exceeded the modest schemes of the founders. Already there were cafés, hotels, book-stores and publishers for every shade of political opinion. Tel-Aviv reminded me of certain sections of the Bronx—in its stridency, its energy, but not in its architecture of glaring cement and plaster already cracked and crumbling. Yet there were differences. The Palestinian sands and sun seemed to possess a vitamin that nourished argument as well

as trade, culture rather than business. One of the streets near Herzl Street, for instance, was named after Bialik; and there, in a house given him by the city, lived the great Hebrew poet. I could not read his work, but I recall the man, vivid with energy, almost a-burst with the vital enthusiasms of the city.

Now, Herzl Street is obscured by a net of broad boulevards weaving far inland through populous suburbs, and north to a harbor enclosed by cement breakwaters and wharves whose Jewish stevedores resemble the longshoremen of all other nations. The modern business buildings reveal more haste than distinction. The residential parts, "international modern," are unimaginative, and veer from the monotonous to bad taste. Walls and façades look as if about to dissolve and to leak rain. There is already a slum: *Hatiqua*, where the Oriental Jews have settled in the outmoded buildings of the nineteen-twenties. The newest hotel on the Mediterranean shore, with a magnificent view of Jaffa's promontory, is a two-dimensioned "show"—one can see it was built by a designer of movie sets. And the rich pilgrims who sit in its lush lobbies are infinitely distant from the kibbutz.

Yet any of Tel-Aviv's tree-bordered avenues has more bookstores than all the Arab capitals put together. The town is crowded and swarming. But the crassness and rawness I noted a generation ago

are gone. The people are busy. *And they are silent!* Tel-Aviv has none of the ebullient racket of Levantine capitals from Istanbul to Athens . . . and New York. Strangely quiet, the people of Tel-Aviv. Here the bourgeois do business, make money, spend it. Here the petty traders trade. Here the intellectuals, the journalists, the politicians, argue. Here is the huge citadel of Labor—the Histadrut headquarters, a not too successful version of some of the architectural triumphs of Rio de Janeiro. Here are theaters, café-terraces. And there is a hush in it all.

This silence is not, as one might guess, fear of the menace of war. It is not the register of inward conflict. It is, rather, a psychological pause within the busy, normal life of working people: a pause that you will note in children as they muse, in artists as they create. A meditative, contemplative pause of *reserve* within a social organism still inchoate. This subtle silence of Tel-Aviv is its best . . . perhaps its one good trait.

Every activity of the country is somehow reflected in Tel-Aviv, every instinctual awareness. This is not articulate in the journals and speech of the dwellers. Yet it is already expressed, beneath the opinions and the arguments, in a quality of silence. Ask a citizen about the Arabs (who claim that they want to murder Israel) or about the Powers (who allowed Spain's republic to be murdered and Hitler to grow great). Whatever the

undistinguished answer, it will be followed by a silence—not of despair, not of confusion. A simple silence of waiting? of accepting that Israel must wait, while it hurries? In this silence, one hears voices of old Jews praying and reading legends of great deeds. This silence within the swarming city it was that convinced me (under the neon lights and the salt-stained stucco fronts) that Tel-Aviv is real.

Other cities, more elemental and precise in function, are more structured than Tel-Aviv. Haifa has the form of its harbor, of Mount Carmel, and of their meanings. It is Israel's second city in size (210,000) and its greatest port (offered by Israel as a free port for the Arab hinterland, if the Arabs will make peace). Along the wharves runs a green boulevard in place of the usual shabby waterfront streets of seafaring towns. Almost at once, Mount Carmel rises. Here are the dwellings of the humble and mid-prosperous and the avenues of their shops. Above, the mountain flattens to a plateau, where villas of the well-to-do overlook the bay of Acre, its Crusaders' battlements and Lebanon's Mount Hermon. Beyond the area of dwelling on Mount Carmel, in a huge wild park, Israel's Technion is making its new home. Here, such schemes as Lachich are hatched; the economy and mechanics of every phase of Israel's growth are here guided

by a school that ranks with M. I. T. Here, in a hall of architectural grace, Professor Walter Clay Lowdermilk spread his maps on a table and explained the plans for routing the waters of the Jordan so that all the land may flourish. Looking up from the maps, I saw all Haifa and Acre and Lebanon, and the blue sea. I saw this stalwart American at my side, whose science has made him a leader in Israel. I thought of Elijah in his contest for the Lord's sake with the priests of Baal—here, where we sat on Mount Carmel.

This good man from North Carolina, educated in Missouri and Oxford and Arizona, explained to me how his irrigation plans would bless the Arabs of Syria and Jordan no less than the Israelis. He shook his head, not understanding their irrational refusal. It seemed natural that this heir of Ann Hutchinson and Roger Williams should be at work on Elijah's miraculous mountain.

The strong stone streets of Haifa, configured to the flanks of a mountain, meet at odd angles, and in these corners flowers have been planted. One of the streets has been named after David Pinski, the great Yiddish playwright. He lives in Haifa, on a different street; but he has a friend who lives on Pinski Street: "Rehov Pinski." "I can't get myself to say Pinski Street," the poet laughed as he told me. "I have the taxi man go to the next block." Pinski is an old man, now; naïve and childlike;

and I felt his relation with Professor Lowdermilk, and with the flowering Haifa corners.

Both Acre and Nazareth are brief runs by car or bus from Haifa. Both are still predominantly Arab. A thousand Palestinian years are contemporaneous and blent in Acre. As one approaches from the south, beyond the Kishon river where Deborah smote the Canaanites and beyond the hill where Napoleon set his guns in his unsuccessful siege of 1799, the gate in the Wall leads to the ancient caravanserai of Han Shawarda. Labyrinthine lanes with the crowded *soukhs* of all Arab towns cover the approach—until one is very close to it—of the Mosque of Jazzar, seat of the leading *knahdis* of Palestinian Islam. There are many mosques and temples. The thirteenth century Crusaders' Church, with its crypt and its flowered arch, abuts on the Citadel, where, according to story, Richard Coeur de Lion was imprisoned. This is apocryphal, like most of the shrines and tombs of Palestine. The most certain fact connecting Richard with Acre is his massacre of the two thousand Saracen troops he captured when he took the town. But the Citadel still stands.

I watched it, dark and morose within its walls and its gardens, vaguely recalling the career of that Richard, archetypical Crusader: compound of corruption, intrigue, sadist love of bloodshed and

courageous piety. A tall man in a leather jerkin, with fishing tackle and a string of fish in his hands, came up to the Citadel gate where I stood. The Citadel is now a state hospital for the insane; and this was the director, inviting me in. The huge immigration of persecuted Jews in the past years, he told me, has created two major medical problems: tuberculosis and psychosis. "We've licked the former," he said. "For the latter, we're under-equipped and under-staffed."

The grim, bare rooms of the old fortress have been turned into wards. In our asylums the regimented order within makes even the most modern building, flooded with sunlight, grim. Here, the reverse. The halls and rooms were dank and dark. But a personal touch was on them: in the heterogeneity of the furniture, the (unsanitary?) decorations on the walls, above all, in the casual pace and spirit of attendants.

As I was about to leave, the good doctor took me down to what had been a dungeon. Here I saw the gallows on which the British, in the last desperate years of the Mandate, took the lives of the young terrorists. A tablet on the wall commemorates the martyrs. The rope, the platform, the mechanism of the lethal drop . . . all was in good order.

I heard contradictory versions of why Nazareth is still prevailingly Arab. They were cut off and cap-

tured before they could retreat, I was told. And I was also told that the Nazarene Arabs did not try to get out, because they were mostly Christian and had less fear of the Jews, less faith in the Moslem leaders who told them to follow the other Arabs out of the country. However, Nazareth, within its bowl of verdant hills, is almost unchanged. One clambers up its multitudinous lanes lined with *soukhs*, a tumult of stone and human flesh, thinking of the Kasbah of Algiers. But the spirit of these Arabs glints less fiercely than in the Kasbah . . . doubtless because they are Christian.

I found them courteous and reasonably content, although the military command over their comings and goings is irksome to them. The Israelis dare not trust them; after all, they are Arabs—of the race and the religion whose leaders have declared war to the death on Israel—and could conceal a dangerous “fifth column.” Most of the Nazarenes are busy with their legitimate affairs, so that the legitimate suspicions of the Israelis cause injustice—hence legitimate resentment. I felt it, wandering up the stone-paved lanes toward the impervious blue sky: for the first time, in Israel, I felt fear. The Jew in Nazareth becomes a stranger. With his army surveillance, his issuing of passes, however reasonable these are, the Israeli stranger becomes a foe. Arab-Christian Nazareth within the heart of Israel; Israel within the heart of Araby: only a

brave exercise of consciousness beyond the scope of politics and national churches can solve this contradiction.

The piped waters of the Yarkon river, I have noted, are already reclaiming the wastes of northern Negev. The Negev is half Israel, and the city of this half is Beersheba, where Abraham and Jacob pitched their tents. Now it is the terminal of the railroad from Tel-Aviv and Lachich, which will extend to Elath on the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea. I was in Beersheba on the day of torrential rains, when the railroad was formally opened, with Ben-Gurion standing in the drench and making what was humorously called "the shortest speech of his career." (And just before I write this, I learn of Arab infiltrations from the nearby Gaza strip, and the blowing up of the new tracks.)

On the morning, after the subaqueous ceremony, the sun shone again. I got up with it and walked to town (there is no hotel in Beersheba, and we had slept in a hostel out of town) to watch the city awake. I found nothing remarkable. The empty central square with its low stucco buildings reminded me of small towns in many a tropical semi-arid land: of Venezuela, Mexico, Morocco, Spain. . . . The same glowing amalgam of blue sky and golden dust, the same clarity of air making each man, beast and tree an isolate entity before the thought of God joins them. The newsman distributed his papers

from Tel-Aviv, the milkman his milk, the café proprietor rustled his iron shutters open and put coffee to boil, a truckload of soldiers pounded noisily from guard to barracks . . . then it occurred to me that this generic, casual *commonness* was precisely the significant fact of Beersheba! I recalled what dear David Pinski had laughingly told me in Haifa: "I look out the window . . . there's a man cleaning the street . . . a Jewish man! A Jewish street!" His eyes shone as he said it. But Pinski is a Diaspora Yiddish-speaking Jew. If he told his little anecdote to a Sabra, the youth would stare at him bluntly and without sympathy. "*So what?*" he would say in idiomatic Hebrew.

Impressive and moving to me, in Beersheba, was the *usual* air of ownership and belonging in these Israelis, who a few years ago were homeless Jews.

But the most striking Negev town is Elath. Here, at the northeast gulf of the Red Sea, Israel tapers to a thin wedge within the blockading, hostile, looming lands of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Always the armed men, in the unpaved streets and in the common dining hall, keep one aware of this. But the same rough men with the desert dust on their faces will remind you that Elath was a port in Solomon's kingdom, and that Solomon's mines and copper smelting plants are a few miles southward. They will even quote God's word to Solomon

in the Torah: "And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean)"; and repeat after David: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea."

Already in Beersheba, the *wild west* atmosphere was strong; here in Elath, it is aggressive. The settlers are indistinguishable from soldiers. They live in low adobe barracks with mats of seaweed at each window and door to keep in the precious moisture. They are rough, sweating men, speaking a soldier's language. And aside from standing guard against imminent Arab inroads (Egypt's Aqaba is visible from every point of Elath, and its lights glower by night), what are they doing? They are building. Elath is to them an idea; a port to the Far East, where the wheat and the oil of the Negev will be transferred to ships; a tourist center . . . door to Solomon's mines. And they are building the idea. Two "luxury" hotels are half-finished. The mines are working. The town already has a social-cultural center: a modern building with a lecture-hall, a library—donated by the CIO and named for its last President, Philip Murray.

A swift commando raid from East and West could cut off Elath in an hour. Elath goes on building its idea. . . .

Statistics say that Safed is Israel's highest city. Indeed, from its mountain top, the immigrant

in a perspective that is kin to the vision of the medieval Cabalists, who are gone, as the old city is gone, destroyed by war and earthquake. The statistics are false. Jerusalem is Israel's loftiest city. And according to statistics, Sodom of the Dead Sea below its gygrant sterile hills is Israel's lowest place. Wrong, again. Jerusalem, at whose walls is the valley of Gei Hinnom . . . the Gehenna that deepened into hell . . . is the land's depth.

Jerusalem is built of the limestone of its hills: none of the stucco and cement of Tel-Aviv that glares in the sun and perishes in the weather. Jerusalem is rock, glowing and enduring. If Tel-Aviv is a chaos that is fluid, Jerusalem is a chaos that is stubborn. The Armistice line, cutting the old city and the boroughs that fall toward Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron from the modern city, and both from the great Hebrew library (now gathering dust), the great Hadassah hospital (now vacant), is its cruel symbol. The new city, where the old Jews have fled to it, is already old, a complex of lanes and tenement alleys. Where the young have built, as in the modern streets of Rehavia or the new apartments along the Tel-Aviv highway, it is prophetic of tomorrow's garden city. This part of Jerusalem is growing fast. Already a new university campus, with a large stadium and pavillions like those of the Technion in Haifa, emerges from the

bare valley of Hakirya. A hall for conventions, pavillions for government bureaux, rise on the site of the camp of the Tenth Roman Legion. And the innumerable religious-national compounds: German, Russian, French, Abyssinian, Greek, with their churches and mosques, find themselves elbowed by up-to-date communities and institutions. The old city is a torso of a body whose organs are denied contact with its limbs.

It may therefore not be said that Jerusalem is an organic city. It is a collection of parts, each with energy expressing its apartness. So remote is the integration that Jerusalem, as a whole and as a capital, is speechless. The government is here, the Knesset meets here, but what they say is expressed in Tel-Aviv and the scattered kibbutzim. No newspaper (except the English *Jerusalem Post*) and no theater. The University classes and the Government offices are dispersed through scores of buildings made for other needs. The voice of the city, which became the voice of the Western world, in that world's ruins is mute.

I recall one morning which drew together much of my experiences in Jerusalem. My guide on this occasion was Dr. Chaim Wardi, liaison officer of Israel's non-Jewish religious institutions: a scholar, it seemed to me, well-fitted for his delicate post by his aesthetic sense of religion, his irony and skeptic humor.

We left the car at the foot of Mount Zion, which purportedly holds the tomb of David. Below us, as we approached the rough stone stair, leading to the Tower, was Gei Hinnom, the valley of Gehenna where the unregenerate Jerusalemites sacrificed children to Baal. With the prophetic evolution of the people, Gehenna came to signify Hell. There it was, between the city walls and the first structure of new Jerusalem, a dingy row of stone cubicles: *Yemin Moshe*, named for its founder, Sir Moses Montefiori, who built this earliest settlement with his money and that of Judah Turo of New Orleans, first sender of American dollars to the holy land. At the base of the stone stairs and at every angle of its wandering ascent were beggars and orthodox Jews mumbling their texts. And behind them under the old walls, soldiers dug trenches and fortifications. Mount Zion tower rises from a garden, lush and unkempt. The ages and the recent Arabs have choked it with debris. Within the blackened walls, a crowd of pilgrims press toward the tomb, its stone arch and canopy enveloped by stained brocades, stippled with the lights of votive candles. Other dungeon-like rooms display, half hidden by the dark, relics of the martyrdom of the Jews in the already classic age of Hitler. In the gardens, the pilgrim Jews are camped, eating their bread and meat, the talk and the children mingling with the soil and the leaf.

A group of youths from North Africa . . . one with a guitar . . . squat in the high grass and sing songs, in Arabic or Sephardic Spanish. They sing for themselves; the other picnic groups do not attend. They are a natural unit, yet each face registers a dominant mood: one passionate, one meditative, one playful, one ironic. And a step beyond them on the terrace, above the old city with its many domes emergent from the swarming roofs, a tangle of barbed wire and a placard: *Keep off! Danger of Mines!*

We leave the garden and pass through an arched tunnel of seeping stone (a glance back reveals the garden a green and vibrant flame). Before us now is the Church of the Dormition Abbey. Its cleansed newness and orderliness remind me that the scene I have just left, of ruined stone and green and Oriental Jews making a holiday, has its own order: a wildness matriced in tradition—like the casual and disorderly pattern of the orthodox “houses of study.”

The Church, built on the site of a fourth century basilica, looks as if it were fresh-washed this morning. The interior is a gleaming modern refrain of the Mosaics of Monte Reale or Ravenna. Murals, statues, altars, crypt . . . all is in place. And the matrix here is Dogma.

This Church, sacred to the spot where Mary fell into a sleep that saved her forever from death, is

in care of Benedictine monks. Their Abbot, Father Leo Rudloff, graciously reveals its treasures to us, while I bear in mind the other kind of order burning about David's tomb. We retire to the Abbot's office, and drink cool Moselle wine and talk in calm and respectful recognition of one another.

The site of the Dormition Abbey has now by doctrine become the site of the Assumption. Dr. Wardi and the Abbot—old friends—discuss the logic of Mary's assumption into the unity of God. The Protestant critics, who deplore this as a step toward polytheism, ignore the organicity and unity of revelation. Long ago, I recall, the Cabalists of Safed deepened their meaning of Jehovah by infusing into it the feminine element of the *Shekinah*, the *Sefirot*. These, of course, are similitudes . . . humanly accessible forms of the one Mystery. For, as the *Book of Zohar* states: "Because in the eternal beginning shape and form are not yet created, He has neither form nor similitude." The similitude is the *chariot* by which the faithful rise toward knowledge. Close to the tower and the tomb of David, I sense vividly the depth of the Catholic doctrine of the "chariot" of Mary.

This Church, this gracious priest, represent a similitude achieved and zealously guarded. The Jews next door, picnicking in the disordered garden, climbing the half-ruined tower from which the Wailing Wall, the Temple square, Gethsemane and

the Dome of the Rock are hardly beyond touch, have lost a similitude, and reach for another. Clamorous and uncouth, they seemed to me younger than the guardians of Mary's shrine. And I recalled the old men perpetually mumbling Torah and Mishnah on the stone stair.

One must not compare until one has accepted! My own frame of reference distorted me to false contrasts. There was manifest youth (to me) in the disorder of the Jews; perhaps youth was less manifest to me in the polished Dormition Church because I was more separate from it.

All the elements of Jerusalem were needed for the potential synthesis the world needed. Only if all were accepted could they transfigure into new life. The Armistice barbed wire cut this potential in two, barring its circulation. This, the disease of the Middle East, is the disease of our world. But disease posits health. If Jerusalem became one city of God—of God worshiped in the similitudes of Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan and Jew—our world might become one city of man.

6. OF THE ARTS

FOOD IN ISRAEL, if one may judge by my experience, is plentiful, healthful, coarse and unattractive. Not only in the kibbutz, where this is compulsory, it seems to come out of huge cauldrons, prepared by shifts of men and women who have other things on their minds than gastronomy. In the settlements, fish, meat, potatoes, soup and soupy legumes emerge from the mass-production process

with all but their calories cooked out of them. The bread is like the loam of the best valleys—and what better could bread be? Cucumber and cabbage are undressed, crude-cut, swarming I doubt not with vitamins, but tasteless. Even the unexcelled oranges and grapefruit, in huge pyramids on the table, lose aroma in the crass communal halls. The point is that food is regarded as necessity, proper diet as hygiene, by a folk in a hurry to solve less soluble problems.

The arts in Israel reminded me of the food. There are plenty of them, they are regarded as a necessity, and a selective process similar to the dietician's controls their production and use.

If one recalls a single set of statistics, that in 1948 there were 600,000 Jews in Palestine and that 850,000 have come in since, one has some notion, for example, of the urgencies of housing. Housing means architecture . . . an art. No Israeli would deny that house-making must be an art. And the Israeli needs other arts with hardly less urgency, at least as soon as he can read and has outlived the *mahabara* to which he was consigned when he came in from North Africa or Yemen. He needs music, he needs books, he needs pictures. Distinguished in Israel is the prevalence of the arts, the common respect for them as objects of use, and their common lack of distinction.

Tel-Aviv for instance bristles with new building.

The vacant sands between it and old Jaffa are now thickly urbanized. New suburbs . . . Bat Yam, Holon . . . entire new cities such as Ramat Gan (with a population of 60,000) have risen on Tel-Aviv's periphery, sudden as apparitions. In scale, this is the process of all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba. Moreover, these new settlements are aesthetically planned: conscious architectural art goes into them. The results are "nutritious": there are parks, there are children's playgrounds, there are perspective and space for the new public edifices. The aim is always modern: functionalism and air; the idiom usually recalls the new standard architectures of Brazil, Mexico, Europe's rebuilt cities. It is almost never as good. Can this not be explained by the superior security and resources of São Paulo, for instance? by the excessive hurry of Israel, doubling its population in a decade?

There is more to it than that. The clue is in the kitchens: the artist, whether cook or builder, must not be *pre-occupied* by alien motives.

I was impressed by the prevalence of painting, the ubiquity of painters. Near Haifa and in Safed, I visited actual artist colonies, where wielders of the brush, with the latest doctrines of Paris sparking their fingers, have made over the ruins of an Arab village or an abandoned hive of Hassids. Jerusalem has its Artists' House with permanent shows. Every private residence with means above

subsistence has pictures on the walls. Even the puritanical kibbutz is being invaded by crayon and oil. The public buildings . . . government, newspaper, eleemosynary institution . . . brighten their corridors, waiting rooms and inner offices, with Israeli painting. The Israeli has indeed overwhelmingly discarded the Mosaic taboos on image-making.

What can be said of this native art? A number of negatives, which perhaps sum up to a character. The painting art has flourished in the past generation among Jews. One thinks of Soutine, Modigliani, Chagall: masters in the great tradition of Europe; and of such dominant American newcomers as Jack Levine and Hyman Bloom. If the Israeli work I saw was typical—and I presume it to be, since I saw it not so much in specific shows as on the walls of offices and homes—the first quality to note in it is the absence of the quality of such masters. Similitudes and influences of technique, to be sure! Inward affinities of spirit and emotion: totally wanting. None of the homeless pietism of Chagall, finding itself a home in cows and fiddlers exploding over housetops. None of the inscrutable Kafka-like nostalgia of Modigliani. None of Soutine's horror of human bodies writhing as in hell and mangled as if swept by a cosmic storm. And none of the morose bitter misanthropy, of the masochist satire, which turns our fleshpots

into carrion, desperately finding beauty in decomposition, as in the work of Levine and Bloom.

I was not so fortunate as to find among the Israeli painters one whom I felt to be a master (perhaps I missed him). Yet under the apt uses of modern idioms, from post-impressionism to surrealism, I sensed the distinguishing trait . . . not always propitious for art . . . of a shared rational *good health*. One would think that Israel were wide and at peace with the world and at ease in a cherished Zion! The colors which render forms, in most of the pictures I saw, are fluid, making the landscape or the bodies flow. But the flow lacks the substance of water; it is *air*. The constant presence is an air, not of sky, not of breathed atmosphere, but of an inwardness. And it is formless. This tactile beauty is related to yearning; my first impression of an ease in Zion may therefore have been false. These painters have felt a chaos in the stones and hills and human structures of their land. They bring it out, and the cause of this must be that they believe in it and love it. Their representation is of formlessness. It reminds one of the nodding, swaying bodies of the Hassid as he sings his prayer for the advent of the Messiah. The redeeming One and the redemption are already (vaguely) within the song for their coming. Prayer is the establishment of an expectation (it has little to do with the vulgar notion of "asking for something"). The light and

fluid air in the Israeli painting is an expectancy . . . a happy one, which greater artists of the last generations have lost in Europe.

Of course, this is metaphysical mood, not doctrine. The painter in whom I see this trait might not know what I was talking about. *He* is painting a hill or a tree or a girl's tresses. He is using perhaps the gamut of Cézanne. But there is more solidity in Cézanne's cloud, more dimension to his haystack, than in the Israeli's rendering of Jerusalem's walled city. Totally unconscious, the Israeli painter, who has outgrown his father's synagogue, infuses the Talmud command that one shall "pray with the bones" into his commonest vision.

Now I recall that there is one item in Israeli's gastronomy (in its broadest terms) where it achieves excellence: the wines, and the brandies distilled from them. Here is subtlety. They are light and volatile. The trait of the great wines of France, the Rhine, Chile, is their substance. The trait of Israel's fermented grape is a dynamic airiness.

In sculpture, also, the Jews in the past decades have achieved central and far-reaching strength: Lipschitz and Jacob Epstein are examples. Among the Israelis they have imitators, not inheritors or successors. The sculpture that impressed me as most authentic, tended toward the cameo. The work of the masters I have named is a reaching out of massive and recalcitrant matter toward spirit,

its transfiguration by spirit. The good Israeli sculptures express rather a retreat from chaos into conventional forms (the most modern, of course) which serve as symbols of order. Much of the work is exquisite. I saw none that appeared to me to be prophetic.

The Hebrews may be said to have been a warlike people. From the conquest of Canaan to Bar Kochba, they revealed their capacity for military action against odds. When the odds finally crushed them, the spiritual forms of combat, typified by Elijah and the literary Prophets, prevailed. The Jewish sects were combative, even if principally turned against the Jewish social body. Cabalism, the later Hassidism, whose gaiety has the aggressiveness of battle, continued the tradition of Jewish pugnacity in spiritual warfare.

Likewise, the Jews may be said always to have had *histrionic* genius. The Sabbath in ancient times was a dramatic spectacle; the detailed instructions of what the celebrants may and may not do are the *minutiae* of a stage director. All the traditional holidays, centering the people upon the Temple in Jerusalem and—after its fall—upon the Torah, are theatrically focused. Even the mood of atonement and contrition, most inward of all, became the drama of Yom Kippur. During the grayest days of exile, the Sabbath, no less than the annual Passover

and Purim, was a play acted in the humblest Jewish home with at least token splendor and with Jehovah as both audience and stage-director. The lowly "house of study" in Israel today reveals that this ancient histrionism has not died. Every hour is a scene of articulate drama; every worshiper and reader of the sacred texts is an actor. Indeed, the 613 Commandments are a sort of cue-book by which man, woman and child rehearse their part in Israel, *with life the stage* on which to act it.

Liberation, of course, and the modern world, weakened the hold of the traditional Jewish forms in home and house of study. The freed dramatic energy flowed outward; half-assimilated Jews became actors, impresarios, directors, from the Théâtre Français to Broadway and Hollywood. (Jewish playwrights were less common or less influential in the gentile theaters, whose spirit was best exemplified by gentile poets.) But as comparative economic strength freed the Jewish communities of Europe, they made their own theaters.

Most of such communities were in Eastern Europe. Their language was Yiddish; their plays largely reflected the culture of their Slav surroundings. When these Yiddish dramas attempted tragedy, they were prone to imitation. When they let themselves be humorous, with the traditional releasing Jewish wisdom, the depths of Jewish suffering and of Jewish vision rose in laughter.

The Yiddish theater soon produced tragic dramatists of genius: David Pinski, Peretz, Hirschbein are examples. But by far the greatest name in nineteenth century Yiddish literature (which began only with the Liberation) is that of a humorist: Scholem Aleichem.

Why this tragic people, in its liberation by the modern world, expressed itself most profoundly in humor is not a mystery. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' freeing of the Jews was based on a creed of empirical rationalism; therefore they owed their freedom to a force which denied their very essence and which their essence denied. This basic situation of *malentendu*, of good arising from evil, can best be expressed by the criticism, the irony, the tender tears of Jewish humor. When the felt dissidence weakens because the poet "believes" in the West's empiricism, or because he believes the Jews to be free of it in their own Zion, we get the inferior seriousness of such Hebrew writers as S. Y. Agnon . . . skillful archaizers at best, whose sumptuous tapestries mean far less than the humble chronicles of Scholem Aleichem.

As Zionism grew stronger, Hebrew began to assert itself over the Yiddish theater. The leader was the Habbima, first Hebrew theater, which opened its doors in Moscow in 1916. It was in the domain of the great Russian theater men: Stanislavsky, Vachtangov and Meyerhold. But it had its own poignant

accent. The Bolshevik revolution, opposed to Zionism as "nationalism," and therefore to Hebrew, jeopardized the Habbima. Strong friends, such as Lunacharsky, first Soviet minister of education, Gorki and Stanislavsky himself, saved it. But in 1926, the Habbima departed from Russia for good. It toured Europe and tried unsuccessfully to find a permanent home in New York. In 1928, it settled in Palestine. For years it had to struggle. Its penury compelled it to be resourceful. It organized as a kibbutz. I recall vividly the "composition" of its production of *Dybbuk* in the twenties: a blending of lyric movements and emotions into strict design. The Jews became proud at last of their Habbima; after the second War, Tel-Aviv built its colonnaded, paneled theater. The reader has already seen it, at the Histadrut Congress.

On this visit I spent two evenings with Habbima. In Tel-Aviv I saw a production of Goethe's *Faust* (Part One); in Jerusalem, where the Habbima rents a movie theater for periodic visits, they gave the translation of a Broadway hit—whose name escapes me at the moment. The art of Habbima has grown ankylotic. I was reminded of a muscle-bound athlete. The production had the benefit of all the skills and tricks of today's stagecraft. Scenic economy, multiple effects with schematic means, the composition of individual and mass stage movements, the pitch of voices—every-

thing was there, as Stanislavsky or Meyerhold had ordered it a generation ago. But it was dead; the lyricism of Goethe, the frisky trivia of the Broadway show—equally dead.

There are two other permanent companies of the theater in Tel-Aviv, and both are more alive than the honored Habbima.

Ohel is the theater of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor. Its founder and chief director, Moshe Halevy, was a co-founder and actor of Habbima in Russia until 1925. He came to Israel, therefore, with the basic Stanislavsky and Vachtangov training. But his social nurture as a labor representative and as organizer of public festivals for Purim and Pentecost (the Jewish Feast of Weeks) saved him from the ossified academicism of today's Habbima.

The play I saw, *Doña Grazia* by Kadiah Molo-dowsky, is a historical drama—one might say pageant—of sixteenth century Jewry's struggle against the Inquisition. The production was conventional, but a naïve freshness and fervor saved it. The acting was not inventive; the play itself was not imaginative. Yet there was a deep identification with the Jews in Antwerp, Venice, Naples, which made the actors the contemporaries of the roles they played. "History" was blended into an emotional present; that monstrosity, the "historical" play or novel, was redeemed. The Habbima per-

formances were ingrown from an aesthetic which had been full of life in Russia. Here a group manifestly unconcerned with theory, established on the stage an organic continuity with the trials of their fathers in Europe and of their fathers' victory over the Europe of the Inquisition. The audience of workers and their families were joined with the actors and the parts they played in a continuum that carried the exile into Israel. The distance was not great, after all, between this sort of ritual show and that of the Passover and the two thousand kibbutz members with whom I had shared a Seder.

The Kameri Theater is the third permanent acting body of Israel. It is the poorest in money, the least protected by officialdom, the most "bohemian," the least "responsible," the gayest—and the best. I saw it in a performance of *An Italian Straw Hat*, a nineteenth century musical comedy by Labiche & Martin. What could these Israelis hope to do with a bit of Parisian froth, staled and soured by a century—and such a century! How would the *boulevard* chitchat sound in Hebrew?

They transfigured the farce, yet neither lost nor spoiled it. Hebrew became liquid and light, blooming naturally into horseplay and flirtatious music. The stage was dusty, the sets were flimsy and smelled of second-hand storage; the costumes, presumed to express the elegance of the Bois de Boulogne and

the Faubourg Saint Germain, were tawdry and not clean. But the bantering play came to life, and within its banter a poignance burgeoned and a gallant grace, as if these Jews were sharing with their people a delightful secret: that strength includes even frailty and nonsense.

The chief actor, Shai Ophir, is a Sabra, a fifth-generation Palestinian Jew. His role called for all the tricks of the *jeune premier cabotin* in a Palais Royal farce. He used them all with classic skill. But the ensemble of his pyrotechnics was a display of maturity (as if, while he did his stuff, he were practicing Buddhist exercises of self-observation). Even more, it was a display of security. He had his audience, close as a handclasp. Each was "thou"—the intimate pronoun—to the other. If this group, I said to myself, can act a better play with such surging energy and strong detachment, they will make a great theater. And I thought wistfully of the slick, expensive facsimiles of life we call "musicals" on Broadway.

A few days later, I was in Beersheba. It was the inauguration day of the railroad; Ben-Gurion was on hand, the town was crowded, and it was raining cats and dogs. We took refuge in a café, and there in the corner, at a long table, were the Kameri players. They were letting their coffee turn cold, while they followed some collective argument (all putting in a word) which evidently delighted them.

For while they argued and commented, they laughed. A girl, exclaiming, half got up from her chair, as if impelled to dance; a man spoke *sotto voce*, and the laughter became a shout. The whole table merged into the noise and warmth of the café.

I had so enjoyed the work of these players that I crossed the room, put my hand on Ophir's shoulder (he was seated square in the center of the long board) and told him what I thought of him and the others. They looked at me in sudden silence. They understood what I said, the praise pleased them; yet they made me feel that my words did not fit. It was as if a youth told an older woman of average looks that she was beautiful. She knows she is not beautiful as he makes her, yet she is glad, despite her dissent, because of the youth's emotion making him talk this nonsense. I was suddenly very young and very naïve before the collective wisdom of this table of young actors. Their silence and their smiles told me: "We're just ourselves. We're just having a good time . . . rather lean though it be . . . *being* ourselves. Why the big words?"

And of course they were right. Habbima had disappointed me, because they had not continued to renew the life which made them grow in Moscow and drove them forth from it. Academicism had no place in Israel, where even the ear-locked Hassids managed to hold a childlike vigor. My enthusiasm for

the Kameri was the product of rediscovering what should be normal in any group—carpenters or actors. If Shai Ophir and his fellows had accepted in solemn seriousness the praise I brought them, they would, in just that degree, have ceased to earn it. They were protecting themselves. And this surely was the organic . . . the unconscious, sane impulse which had made them produce that rowdy nothing by Labiche. And this was why their audiences loved them.

The fact that the Kameri showed daring by an old-fashioned production of an old-fashioned trifle helped me to a perspective from which to understand the arts of the Israelis. The modern idioms in painting, in architecture, in letters and on the stage, which for a large part of the world still represent a will for deliberate novelty, are for them exactly the reverse: become the common language, they are accepted as the feasible means for conforming. To build in the functional style, to paint in the surrealist or expressionist techniques, to compose atonally, is still for the older civilizations to register a challenge, a defiance. For the Israeli, it is to embrace the normal.

How urgent the normal is for the Zionist, the Israeli, we shall soon see. . . .

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7. THE QUEST FOR THE NORMAL

THE ESSENTIAL trait of the young Israelis, the most surprising, is their sobriety. They refuse the romantic, the heroic. They distrust enthusiasm, including that of their Zionist elders. What they seek, what they love, live for, and are ready to die for, is *the normal*.

I recall the communist youth: in Russia, when the Revolution was still in its psychological stage of

defense against the world; in Europe and the Americas during the great Depression. This youth was enthusiast and absolutist. Cast out from the no longer viable orthodoxies of their parents: Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism, the creed of competitive democracy, they sought a doctrine and a dogma in place of the old. They believed in Marx: the revelation of his "scriptures." Fanatic, they thirsted to obey and be martyrs. The romantic poetry of their lives was poignant. What we, whose cooler heads appeared to them as mindless, called utopia, was for them the scientific fact just around the corner: all they required was to learn the Marxist decalogue, knock off the evil capitalists and their "lackeys," follow their priests' orders, and presto! they would have it. The unstable, the vulnerable, the unrealistic in these revolutionary youths was appealing, as young forms of life will always be; but it frightened. One was appalled to find such complex human passion committed to a way of life whose shallow simplifications must betray it. And indeed, this revolutionary youth became the prey of demagogues and bosses, both communist and fascist. In the more politically mature countries of the West, where Russian communism and Italo-German fascism were too naïvely crude to prevail against the appeal of the liberal creeds, they became the victims of their own disillusion, plunging from ignorant fanaticism into an

equally ignorant despair. Such intellectual modes as Dada, surrealism, atheist existentialism, the vogue of Kafka (apart from his indubitable aesthetic value), can be understood only as reactions against the naïve faiths in utopias, spontaneous and automatic.

The typical young Israeli, immigrant or Sabra, is cool without cynicism, collected without passivity, sober without gloom. He is the enemy of dogmas. Messianism, even that of the Marxist and the Zionist; utopianism, even that of the American mechanolatrist, are not in his lexicon. Many have been heroes and martyrs. Do not use the word, if you wish them to respect you.

There are exceptions, as we have seen: the extreme rightists of the *Heirut*, or the minority communist groups bravely at work each day trying to reconcile the latest "dialectical" notions of Moscow's power-politics machine (Stalin's anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, the sale of heavy arms to Egypt, etc.) with social justice. Or the brilliant young ex-terrorist whose ideas I have already described: ideas as absolutist as those of the Essenes must have been, who withdrew from the impurities of the Temple to their commune on the Dead Sea. And these exceptions are important. They reveal the rich contrapuntal varieties of human material in this perpendicular little land. But the rank and file of Israeli youth live on dimensions of conscious-

ness distinct from ideology, which always tends toward the absolute—whether it be that of the platitudinous politician or of the noble idealist: a Bergmann, a Buber, a Magnes. They have immediate work to do, these young men and women: their specific share in the creating of a nation. And most important of all is that it be a *normal* nation. It is small, and they know it. They have no desire to make it mighty. It has in the past played a great role in the world's cultures. This is of small interest to them. What concerns them is the immediate problem of becoming normal. They hardly think of themselves as Jews (although of course they are far from denial), for the word is eloquent of all the *abnormalities* of twenty centuries of exile. They are *Israelis*. If they are attacked again, as in 1948, by refusers of their normal right to be themselves, they will defend their land which incarnates that right, on every front, in every settlement. And against the peril, they build, dig trenches, turn commune into fort. But this to them is not heroic. The mother beast who defends her lair against the superior force of an armed man is not troubled by the concept of heroism. War, moreover, in this mid-century is normal—and how they know it! Death is normal. That every creature who is born risks death until it dies, they implicitly accept. If death comes, while they defend their land: this too is normal. Meanwhile, they are alive; and because it is good

to be alive . . . normally, naturally good . . . they sing soberly and laugh, while they work. As to the possible death of their young nation, they are too full of life to stop to conceive it. Their new-found land has grown so full of *them* who are alive, that they cannot imagine Israel's non-living. Bid them, rather, to see the actual land disappear. *They* are the land (this, their wordless metaphysics). As they transform it from waste to garden, from rock to forest, the land becomes themselves.

This is the mood of young Israel, unassertive, potent, as I came to sense it. . . .

Scenes like instruments of an orchestra, playing a single theme in individual *timbres* . . . I see the eighteen-year-old girls, uniformed, in their boot-camp, squatting demurely on the ground before their barracks, while the woman lieutenant teaches them the parts and use of a sub-machine gun (made in Israel). The girls repeat what they've been shown, at ease as if threading a needle. They feel no incongruity. Their arms, muscled from the spading of loam, the handling of heavy pots, comfortably hold the lethal instrument. The sun is hot, and their breasts, lifting their khaki blouses, are moist. The gun's barrel presses into the flesh of a girl who is clumsy; her mates smile and help her.

. . . I see a young officer, commander of the Jerusalem district, at his bare table, pointing to one of

several telephones before him. The direct line, he tells me, is to his opposite number in the Jordan Jerusalem forces. On the wall, a huge map shows the exact details of the Armistice line cutting and twisting through the city streets. If there is trouble, he explains, he and his enemy confer by telephone. I gather their relations are good; I recall that the Arab's government refuses to acknowledge Israel's existence. The grotesque situation . . . Kafka-like . . . appalls me. Colonel Herzog feels at home in it. With less histrionic emphasis than a sales manager in a New York office explaining his selling outlets on a map of his district on the wall, he outlines the tactical situation.

. . . I sip wine with the Colonel's father, who is Chief Rabbi of all Israel's Ashkenazic congregations. He is a bearded, dry little man, whose white hair is topped by the black *yarmulke*. Is he a pious, learned man? Probably. But he feels no need to play a conscious role of spiritual leader. He asks shrewd and matter-of-fact questions about America, about Russia. He is manifestly aware of his people's peril, surrounded as they are by the millions of Arabs, the resources of millions of square miles, the indifference and confusions of the Powers, intent on their own schemes. But he is not moved by any need for eloquence or emphasis. His voice and his sharp eyes are dry. He is where I find him, because of the facts of yesterday. Where

he (and his flock) will be tomorrow depends on the facts of today. He is interested in facts. Does the visiting American have some facts?

. . . Between Ashkelon and Beersheba, we stop at a roadside restaurant for a cup of coffee. Two dusty, battered buses roll up and discharge a cargo of boys and girls from Tel-Aviv on their way to Elath of the Red Sea: a jaunt, a picnic. A group sit near me sipping soda-pop. The laughter of fifty youths vibrates the terrace, plunging the flimsy building into its cool dance like the wavy reflexions of a house in water. I ask the girls their origins: Germany, Czechoslovakia, the American Midwest. I ask why they are here. Well, they are at home, they feel at home, they are all busy at one job or another, making it home. That's good, isn't it? (They smile somewhat pityingly at my outlandish questions.) And why are they going to Elath? It's a part of home they want to see, with a holiday in which to see it.

. . . In Galilee we pick up two young Latin-Americans walking from town back to their kibbutz, which makes pottery. As soon as they feel my interest, they go into details: they know a good deal about ceramics; they are proud that they could sell twice their output. Each member, of course, shares alike in the communal wealth. Somehow, the normal ego of these young men has become social. And their communal ego expresses *itself* in a larger unit. All this implicit: no word is said about it.

... In Haifa, one evening, Carl Alpert, the breezy assistant to the President of the Technion, races me in his car up the zig-zag streets of Mount Carmel to a prosperous villa on the high plateau. As we enter the house, the distance to *exurbia* in Westport, Connecticut, dissolves. In the party are businessmen, professional men, a few professors, and the smart-frocked wives. On the tables, along with the tall whisky-and-sodas, are the magazines and novels read in Fairfield County. But these are all Israelis! They speak American English—and their children speak it with strong Hebrew accent. They have settled in Israel for various reasons. Some came from Zionist homes. Some came because they were offered good positions at the great technological school. Some have grasped a good business chance. With considerable effort, I bring the talk to the crisis of Israel. Their tone of badinage does not change. They are willing to discuss the circumambient peril, if I insist; they will not lose their *sangfroid*, their *aplomb*. They are civilized people. The house, the dress, the diet of these ex-Americans are familiar, and with these the resemblance to *exurbia* ceases. Here is no feverish emphasis on self-assertion, as among American Jews of the same social and intellectual cadre. There is no tension, no high-pitched voice. There is no over-drinking. Perhaps the state of normalcy will not last. Perhaps, to the *obligato* of the U.N.'s regrets and protests, the Arab planes will bomb Israel to rubble, or the

slow Armistice blockade dry up its commerce as the blocked irrigation-plans are already drying up its water. It's all quite possible . . . more possible, they admit, than Hitler's crematoria seemed to be in 1930. The large room is deliberately gay with cretonnes and pastel colors and samples of the folk arts of Yemen. Fear, which is rational, is not altogether absent. But anxiety is not here, as in the land of endless cocktails, the land of security and power. A certain irradiation from the folk annuls it.

. . . A few days later, I stood in a large temporary camp (*mahabara*) of newly arrived Oriental Jews above Tiberias and its Lake. No millionaire could have bought a better location for his palace. Below us was the ancient city named for the Roman emperor who sought its healing waters and the Lake, opalescent as the sun died on it. There, 700 feet below sea level, the air was sultry and opaque; here, a luminous cool breeze whipped the dust, charging the rows of squalid huts with liberation.

It was late afternoon, the men were home from their work on the roads and nearby farms. "Home" was the word. For each woman had given her shack a signature: the cover on a bed, a vase of flowers, an easy chair improvised from boxes. Children played in the valleys, as they still play in the streets of ancient towns, turning their age into youth, owning and taking them for granted. The men stood

about in little groups, always separate from the women, talking, smoking, laughing. I soon had a group about me. One man said: "Tell Mr. Eisenhower that he must let us have the guns we need. Nothing else. Then we can take care of our Israel." They spoke jargons of Arabic-Aramaic or Sephardic-Spanish. They lived in miserable shacks. They had makeshift jobs. But they needed to tell the world that, like the Arab, the American, the Russian, they were home. *Tell Mr. Eisenhower*; not beg him . . . I felt in this place no humble spirit of the receiver of charity. I remembered that in the classic Jewish community the rich man was always proud to give his daughter in marriage to the penniless scholar. These men were far from being scholars; but they intuitively had the same sense of their own value and of the rights it brought. *They* would take care of the duties.

Old-school Zionists today are worried about these new immigrants from the poorest levels of the North African *mellahs*. Unlike the first "flights" of Zionists, they are ignorant, skill-less, economically depressed. What sort of soldiers will they make if the Arabs attack again, compared to the passionate and conscious pilgrims who came to Palestine to build the messianic Zion and who outwitted the Arab armies in 1948? And what sort of children will these Orientals procreate? I think this concern of the intellectuals is vain. The genes of

man follow no such simple arithmetic rules. The offspring of the poor, of the misfit and the outcast may be as high human material as the heirs of the successful. America is here to prove it.

It is normal for a man to feel at home on his land; even the serf feels it. For almost two thousand years the Jews have led lives of abnormality. Even for the brief generations of North Africa and Spain when they enjoyed community on equal terms with their neighbors, since their minds remained centered upon Jerusalem, they were an abnormal people. This, they accepted . . . not without vainglory. Were they not "the chosen people"? Had not God said to them: "You only have I known of all the families of earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities"? So that even their sufferings, charged with knowledge, were abnormal? And was it not written that the Messiah who would redeem the world would be of Jewish blood? The badge of the Jew, by the measure of all peoples whose spirit rises straight from the soil that feeds them, is inconformity and abnormality . . . even his name of Jew, which his leaders strive to remind him is his glory. "The peculiar people." Edom and Rome said it. With his mother's milk, he knows it.

Zionism may be called a method of the Jews against their abnormality. The common one, of course, has been assimilation: and it was always

widely, although individually, practiced. Jews became Christians; Jews became Moslem; in epochs of revolt against religion, Jews became empiricists, rationalists, positivists, socialists . . . all means of being normal. Only the Remnant, it appeared to the Prophets, continued to be Jews, treasuring their abnormality as a mission, whose End would come only with the end of history, with the Messiah.

The hunger for return to the land where their genius first flowered was never absent. And in all the ages, after the Roman massacres, Jewish pilgrims went back. The distinctive trait of Zionism was that it professed normalcy for the Jew, not through assimilation in any of its forms, but by a return to the usual life of a nation on its own land. Since even in Judea prophetic Judaism, by its messianism and its mission of winning the whole world for Jehovah and his love, had made the Jew a priori a peculiar people, Zionism by-passed the religious prophetic forms of Jewish culture. It did not categorically deny them; and it did not by-pass their essence: messianic justice. An orthodox Jew could be a Zionist. But it was overwhelmingly the non-orthodox Jew, the non-observing Jew, the empiricist and rationalist of the West and of revolutionary Russia, who created Zionism as a political doctrine. The spiritual energy within this doctrine was still Jewish. And the devout, even the pious millionaires who had begun to finance Jewish colo-

nies in Palestine before Theodore Herzl was born (in Budapest, in 1860) were suspicious of the movement he created.

In Herzl, the bare will of Zionism as a practicable *renormalization* of the Jew is nakedly present. Herzl, clever journalist, superficial playwright, led the common life of the assimilated Jewish intellectual in Vienna and Western Europe. Jewish religion meant nothing to him. He wanted to be a normal modern European. The Dreyfus Affair shattered his illusions. His argument against normality by assimilation was not that it was unworthy of the Jew, but that it was impossible for even the most willing, the most unbelieving Jew. Like all great political leaders, he simplified, and his simplification could be adapted to the need of diverse complex natures.

Even the orthodox could transpose Herzl's doctrine of the Jewish state, with Jerusalem its capital, into the terms of their messianism. More numerous, the liberal . . . usually socialist and rationalist . . . Jew of Eastern Europe could sluice his largely unconscious religious energy (fruit of his mystical culture) into Herzl's scheme of a democratic nation building social justice: a scheme that was poignantly attractive to Jews living in the dark pale of the Czar under the knout of the Cossacks. And to the Jews of Germany and France and England, the plan made sense as they observed—a

century after the French Revolution—the bitter limits of their freedom, with anti-Semitism rising, although no one dreamed of its Hitlerian climax.

This is not the place for an analysis of Zionism; even Herzl's form of it cannot be traced without study of the social, economic and intellectual forces that were, in his day, preparing the death of the world of liberal capitalism. What concerns us here is the urge toward normality which the decadence of orthodox Judaism, the released energy of that decadence, and the rise of nationalisms heightened among the Jews, and which Herzl represented.

The consciously religious Jew, whatever he may be . . . in a gentile or a Jewish state . . . must forego his hunger for the normal, since the historic premise of his life as a Jew posits abnormality. Herzl revealed the limits of his understanding of the Jew, when—discouraged by the failure of his attempts to buy Palestine from Turkey's Sultan, and frightened by the pogroms in Russia following hard on the new spate of anti-Semitism in the West—he favored acceptance of Britain's offer of territory in East Africa, between Kilimanjaro and Kenya, southeast of Uganda on the Azanian Sea, as a temporary Jewish homeland. The Russian Zionists, led by such men as Menachem Ussishkin, rebelled. Closer to the humble Jewish folk, they knew that Zionism needed *Zion*, with all the holy land's associations, historical and mystical. The Jews, as their

mystical body dissolved in the enzymes of the modern scientific age, hungered to be a normal people, but their normality must be built upon the recovered home of Abraham and David, however abnormal it might be for a people to return, after two thousand years, to the remote land of legendary fathers . . . a land since occupied by Greek, Roman, Mameluke, Saracen, Druse, crusading "Frank" and Turk.

The young Israeli incarnates the hunger of the Jew to achieve the normal. He is in this the heir of the Zionists. He inherits the profound irony of needing to be both normal and yet a Jew: of a nation whose origins, whose culture and endurance, posit the abnormal.

If this, in terms of logic, is paradox and inner contradiction, it is also the *organic tension* that is life. With no such unresolved stresses, the young Israeli would be a theorem, not a human.

The Sabra yearns to be normal with a passion even Herzl would not have known. For to the bitter experiences of Herzl's generation have been added the horrors of Hitler's. The Jew, in Hitler's debased version of Plato's republic, was abnormal—as was the poet in the Greek's. The Sabra instinctually has felt that in our day of massed automotive power, deviation from the norm leads to the gas-chamber. The symbol, of course, must not be

literally applied. Russia, China, commerce-bound America, have their own somewhat gentler methods: perhaps the natural selection of what "fits," perhaps the natural malnutrition of what does not, suffices. But in a regimented and tightly implemented world, has the Jew a viable place?

The Sabra has not yet figured out where his values must bring him. He instinctively resents even the most laudable characterization which would again mark him, like his Jewish fathers. To be "the chosen of God," to feel called upon to build in Israel "the perfect society," to admit Israel's "special mission to the nations": all this he rejects. The young Israelis want to be simply men and women, living their lives like you and me. And the relief of it, intense unto joy, dims the threat of annihilating war. Indeed, war and possible death are normal in this world. The Israelis do not fear them.

Thus, out of the centuries in which the Jews accepted their destiny as apart, and were crucified for it, has come this thirst of the Israelis to be . . . not saviors, not world-leaders, certainly not the Lord's sacrifice . . . but normal people. And for this, they are ready to die: heroes and martyrs.

But heroes and martyrs are not normal people. And to be a Jew, whether one likes or dislikes it, is no normal destiny.

The Zionists, let us recall, longed for normalization, but in their loyalty to their inheritance, in their

energy and will, the non-normal messianism of the Jew was present. Their early settlements were utopian, conscious of a "peculiar" mission. The Sabras occupy this Zionist homeland; but if their present temper prevails, may they not make of it a non-Zionist republic? Already there are keen critics in Israel who fear this. They recognize the ideological drive of the founding Zionists, the Jewish passion that was in them. Looking at the Oriental Jew, at the matter-of-fact Sabra, they ask: where is it?

But let us go a little deeper. The fathers of the Israelis yearned to be normal, perhaps (despite their loyalty to the Jewish culture) because they were tired . . . tired of persecution, tired of social and spiritual ghettos, tired of Jewishness, whose universal meanings the modern world seemed to be dissolving in themselves. Out of weariness, which is weakness, may have come in part the dogged strength of the early pioneers, who passed through penury and pain to drain the swamps, water the deserts, grow the fruit-bearing trees of Israel. This emergence of profounder strength from overt weakness is also a norm. The young Sabra inherits it—both the weakness and the strength—and it is part of his pathos. When one sees them, the boys and the girls, gay at their tasks, defeating a dark future by their enjoyment of *now*, one feels *as a dimension of them* the concentration camps of Hitler, the

shambles of Warsaw, the foundering, wandering migration ships, packed with human dolor, that at last beached them in Israel.

Every child whose nature, whose circumstance, perhaps whose genius, destine him to an intensely individual life, feels the need to conform. He hungers to "belong," moved by the presentiment that "belonging" may be denied him. And this need must be respected and nurtured. For in the depth of man's contrapuntal nature it is true. The genius may be rejected by his world; he belongs in it nevertheless. The history of the Jews has been no normal event. The present nation of Israel, in neither its origins nor its energies, its situation nor its values, is normal. The youth of Israel, if they survive, must know this. They must produce leaders who confront them with the paradox of their being Jews: of their wants and their needs. This would be the hour of birth for an Israeli culture. . . .¹

¹ The reader will, of course, not infer from the longing for normalcy among the young Israelis that it is always attained. There is plenty of neurosis, psychosis and juvenile delinquency in Israel; and not only among survivors of concentration-camps or among Orientals, whose uprooting and sudden plunge, by "Operation Magic Carpet," into the Western world, may have been too sudden. Among the middle-class citizens, for example, there are enough of the maladjusted to keep the psychoanalysts and psychiatrists busy.

Crime has sharply decreased in the last decade. The total population of 1944/45 was about equal to the present: the loss of Arabs has been balanced by the new Jewish immigration. The number of convicts has been halved. On the other hand, juvenile delinquency is rising. In 1949, the police arrested 11 juveniles per 10,000 popula-

Israel's quest of the normal could prove to be as fabulous . . . and as fertile . . . as the Jews' waiting for the Messiah.

tion; in 1954, they arrested 13. This could mean merely that the police and the courts have become more active. Or it could mean that the rejection of a shallow empirical "norm" among the Sabras is approaching.

8. LEADERS IN ISRAEL

ARE THERE any leaders *of* Israel? I will not try to answer with a Yes or No. I met, and was impressed with, military leaders. I met and talked with political leaders, labor leaders, industrial leaders . . . intellectual and literary leaders, men of the Rabbinate who, presumably, are spiritual leaders. They abound; and doubtless the little nation's peril at the bridgehead of a dangerous world calls for a high

quota of capable and devoted men and women. Why do I feel them to be leaders *in* Israel—which would suggest that Israel, mass product of a complex of social forces, somehow moves by its own momentum? These leaders are so close to the common man and woman that they are almost identical with them. This implies the strength of solidarity, which the leader must have. It could imply a weakness . . . a want of that detachment through a guiding vision which integrates percept and act.

As I look back in perspective upon my many meetings with Israel's leaders, my forming memory picks out two women.

Lieutenant Colonel Dinah Werth would not think of herself as a leader, even in her army. She heads the training camp for girls which I have already mentioned. She is a silent but not solemn woman of still fresh middle age. One feels she is strong, dominant . . . even domineering, but salted with humor. One feels she is capable of tenderness, and could be ruthless. It seemed right that she should be a soldier (and this was a surprise to me, this "rightness").

Since she had elected to be my guide through her camp, she was impatient with me because I asked so few questions, and preferred to wander about and merely use my eyes. Did I not wish to have more *facts* about girl recruiting? Her sense of efficiency was offended. Her smile reproved and forgave me.

But I felt I must please her; somehow this became important. I asked if she had much trouble with her 18-year-olds suddenly whisked from loving homes into the harsh impersonality of the camp. She said: "The fathers, if anyone, make the trouble. They're possessive, they worry about their babies." She said it with motherly indulgence. The fathers were a bother, but she did not quite wish to eliminate them.

At last, we went to the large bare mess-hall for lunch. At our long table sat a number of girl non-com officers; and opposite us were a small delegation of Burmese women soldiers in spic-and-span blue uniforms—sent by their government to study the exemplary Israeli methods for training girl soldiers. The hollow wooden hall rang with feminine voices. The Burmese barely spoke. The Lieutenant Colonel was in touch with us all. I asked her questions (since she seemed to want them); and while the Colonel answered, instinctively, *unconsciously*, she took the orange from my plate and . . . neatly, maternally . . . peeled and quartered it for me.

I had tea with Golda Meir, former Minister of Labor who replaced Moshe Sharett in the Foreign Office. In Marie Syrkin's remarkable biography, the frontispiece photograph shows a woman of perhaps thirty-five: a face balanced between the firm mouth

and the brooding eyes. The coarse black hair frames a delicate forehead, hiding the ears and rhythmically slanted to the prominent jaw. The effect is of a feminine energy mobilized by a purpose that might be called combative. Now, when Mrs. Meir is fifty-eight, her eyes have lost their brooding softness. The whole face has become grim and massive . . . instrument of a will to perpetual battle, in which woman and loveliness have suffered losses. The woman is still there: all mother, now, of the breed that fights for her young . . . disturbingly impersonal.

Mrs. Meir received us (Rachel Tov, wife of Moshe Tov, went with me) in a wide apartment looking west toward the Mediterranean over the Judean hills. There were the inevitable Israeli pictures on the walls (although with a preponderance of black and white) and family photographs, including her son's, Menachem, the young cellist. Casals, Mrs. Meir told us, has accepted him as a pupil. "But of course," she added, "in the present crisis he can't go to Casals. He won't leave Israel." She served the tea, bringing it herself from the kitchen with a chocolate cake baked by her own hands. But despite the personal photos, the sumptuously colored inlaid table made by Yemenite Jews and the homemade cake, the room had a pervasive coolness, a watchtower air. It was a place of command. One felt it was not intimately lived in. One felt this woman, not without the price

of bleakness and deprivation, had wived herself to a struggling people. She is a mother . . . of the line of Deborah, warrior and judge, and of Judith. The Rachel or Rebecca of that early portrait has been sacrificed.

Why, in my recollection of Israel's leaders, do I begin with two women, a woman soldier and a woman labor captain? Is Israel today a motherland, rather than a fatherland? And what is the difference between them? A motherland, one might say, is the instinctual and carnal parent: nourisher and passional defender: the predominate presence for animals and children. Fatherland infers the dimension of intellectual detachment, the will to sacrifice flesh for essence, the aggressiveness of idea rather than the defensiveness of creature need. . . . And now, men of leadership in Israel come to my mind, who bear out this metaphor of motherland. . . .

Zalman Aranne, for example, the Minister of Education and Culture. He is a heavy-bodied man whose rough-hewn features exude tenderness. Israel for him is a home and a house, and he sees it in terms of the East-European intellectual nourished by Rousseau and Tolstoi and Proudhon, by Ahad Ha'am and Gordon and Ben Jehuda, the amazing re-creator of spoken Hebrew. He spoke of the Oriental Jews, now half Israel's population. They have to be "homed." Aranne speaks like a house-mother faced with the need of finding beds for

these new family members who have come to stay.

As I get up to leave, Aranne says: "Wait," and conducts me to the balcony outside his office. We look directly down on the Old City, now Jordan's. "See," he says and stands silently beside me. I know what he is thinking: What a waste of room, when we need it so much! Aranne thinks of Israel's problem as essentially cultural, and *feels* it in quantitative terms . . . trait of a synthesis that bears the sign of woman.

Or Mordecai Bentov, Minister of Industrial Development, whose office guides the spilth of dams, factories, power-plants throughout the tumescent land. I sit next to Bentov on the platform of the Histadrut Congress, and we talk. He is a little man, with the brow of a poet: one of the two Cabinet Ministers belonging to *Mapam*, the extreme left party that desperately clings to faith in Russia. He is lonely, sensitive, intellectually naïve. I understand his need of the support of Russia's huge collectives against what he feels to be man's chief enemy: the imperialist West. I understand why he belongs to a kibbutz. He is a man moved by his primary feelings, with the conventional ideas of the old-school intellectual to sustain them.

The same quality of motherland is manifest in Israel's titular head, Itzak Ben Tzvi. He receives

me in the charmingly modest Presidential "palace," paneled in native woods, profuse with Israeli paintings and folk arts. The place is like a breezeway, between the heavy rooms of government: a recess free of the heat and winds of doctrine, made for courtesy and relaxation. The President bears out our symbol. He is a man of seventy-two, tall, lean, erect. He has had a long career with the socialist Zionist movement, in Russia, in Palestine, in America (when the Turks exiled him) and in the struggle against the British Mandate. Now, he rests in his presiding chair, with a maternal eye over the children. We talk of the Arabs; and he reveals a simple mind. "We beat them, didn't we?" he exclaims. "Why don't they acknowledge the facts?" He has turned the continuous and complex war of the Middle East into a game of chess. The Israelis won the match. Why won't the Arabs follow the rules?

Gershon Agron, mayor of Jerusalem and founder of its excellent English language newspaper, the *Jerusalem Post*, was born in Russia, educated in America where he became an expert journalist, joined the Jewish Legion under Allenby during the first War and, when demobilized, settled in Palestine. He and his wife received me in an ultra-modern house with a galleried library whose shelves, towering above his head (he is a short man), are

stocked with books on politics and art. The usual Israeli pictures.

Bluff, quick and subtle, Agron glows with energy. It was clear that he is having a good time running Jerusalem, as Fiorello La Guardia (of whom he reminded me) had a good time running New York. He confessed to me with a grin that it was not easy for the Israeli boys not to put a stop once for all to the constant border provocations by getting at the Arabs. He, too, found it hard. . . . Of course, they wouldn't. . . .

"With one arm," he laughed, "meaning a tank or a plane, we can lick their three. But we need to have the *one*."

I understood in his ebullient presence the dynamic orderliness of the city he governs. There's a warmth in the new town that is not of the climate. A personal touch—like a woman's? Of course, this is not the New Jerusalem of the hymns and the Hassids. Is not Agron a man totally of the rational Western order? Why then had he not stayed in New York, where the plums of the brilliant newspaper editor are larger and much sweeter? Some of the ethnic mysticism of Golda Meir was in him.

Yigdael Yadin, Army Chief of Staff in the Arab war, also lives in an ultra-modern house equipped with functional furniture and the native arts.

Yadin, a Sabra, is an archaeologist by profession. The years of the British Mandate gave him the veneer of a British university gentleman; the West trained his mind. I asked him how a digger of ruins, a decoder of esoteric scrolls (his father was a Palestinian archeologist before him), could have learned so quickly and so well the techniques of war.

"The science of war," he answered in his Oxford English, "aside from the matter of the manuals, which anyone can absorb in a few weeks, is simply the progressive application of intelligence to specific situations. You have first to know your own forces, and first and last you have to know your enemy. If you do, your aim finds a method, a channel of action, from moment to moment, which leads to its own end."

I felt that this brilliant, mobile man (he was just past thirty when the Arabs invaded) knew the situation of Palestine within the Arab world as a boy knows the streets where he grew up and played. He knew "his way around." Conflict and the sudden exigencies of defense were as familiar to him as the traffic on the corner. And intellectual precision was a tool adequate for the battle against odds with the Arabs (yesterday and again perhaps tomorrow) and for the unravelment of the Dead Sea Scrolls. . . . Then with the easiest of transitions (like a modulation in music) he changed the subject and showed

me his latest discovery: a popular version of *Genesis*, found among the treasures of what had probably been a community of Essenes not far north of Sodom: a version unlike the Bible's, which tells the reader what Sarah wore and how Rachel cooked supper.

One of the brainiest men I met among Israel's active figures was Berl Locker, born in Russia, a Histadrut leader and chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency. This financial organ might be called a "queen mother" to the government. For in economics Israel is still a minor. Its dependance on American money has worried Israel's non-Jewish well-wishers, who ignore the ancient Jewish tradition of subsidizing the youth of promise.

The fact is, of course, that young nations have often been "subsidized" in one or another form. To give but one instance: until close to 1900, the "subsidy" of the United States consisted of a continent of boundless resources, of a huge ingathering of immigrants to develop them, and of the unpaid protection of the British Navy (*Pax Britannica*), which freed American manpower and American wealth for productive labor. Israel's dollars are a not abnormal element of its youth as an undeveloped and exposed land. The effect of the dollars on Israel's psyche is another question.

Mr. Locker made me think of certain American

bankers I have known: Otto Kahn, Frank Vanderlip, above all Dwight Morrow. Like them, he has an energy fluidly and gracefully taking the form of directing immediate facts that need direction: a tactful awareness of the medium in which he works. This medium is the administration of economic forces, their transposing into political and diplomatic terms. The banker, indeed, has been the essential leader in the imperialist phase of Western capitalism. In Mr. Locker I felt I somewhat understood Israel's economic successes—and also its hazards. For Israel's economy is still in the cocoon stage; until peace is made with the Arabs, until the irrigation projects are fulfilled, and the present blockades and embargoes are abolished, Israel's economy may be said to exist only as the butterfly exists in the grub.

The United States is of course the leader . . . the one strong remaining leader . . . of this last stage of capitalism, in which free markets replace colonies. In this sense, Israel is a "satellite." But the system itself is passing, and with the transition the place of the banker-statesman is doomed. The banker can *mold* given material, not create new forms. And the new are needed. Impotence to create makes men cling to old forms, until they become destroyers. This indeed has been the tragedy of the masters of our Western economic order. The very men who directed its growth fledged the evils that

have corrupted it. Whether the fate of Mr. Locker and his associates will share this ambivalence I do not know. If Israel's economy, propped by capitalist funds and the leaders that come with them, weakened such prophetic experiments as the kibbutz; if the Histadrut became a monolithic economic power for centralization, it would be a supreme irony in the career of a people who endured and remained one, for two millenia, without centralizing the authority of their religion.

Moshe Sharett, first Foreign Minister of Israel, was still in his post when I knew him. A few years ago, on Ben-Gurion's temporary retirement to his kibbutz in the Negev, Sharett became Prime Minister. Except for Ben-Gurion, he was the most widely known of Israel's leaders. He is a short, slight man with a heavy head and features which a *burnous* would make startlingly Arab. And although he was born in Russia (in 1894), his youth was lived in an Arab village, and he speaks Arabic like a native. He studied law in Istanbul, and during the first War was an officer in the Turkish army. His almost universal acquaintance with every part of the Jews' exile from Yemen to America, and his fabulous capacity for work, made him a logical choice for his post. He has the born traits, good and bad, of the conventional diplomat. His mind is agile, and he believes in his mind . . . believes in its reason, with an emotion that approaches pride.

Perhaps the truer word is vanity: a venial sin, whereas pride is mortal. I suspect that Moshe Sharett has vanity, whereas Ben-Gurion has pride. With vanity, Sharett's eyes reveal sorrow. They know anxiety; but I doubt that he realizes its universal cause, which is the abyss between self and God, and which can be known only if God within the self is known. Do not infer from what I say that Sharett has the vulgar vanities of the prima donna or the politician. I recall the first evening I met him, a dinner at the house of Mr. Locker. He sat while the score of guests volleyed their talk, more silent than all the others; quietly attentive as if eager to learn. Brooding. I sensed sadness in him, and the vanity of the rationalist who believes that he can specify the causes of human suffering. Later, in his Foreign Office, where he perched behind his long table like a vatic bird, and I fired my questions, I had the sense of a hiatus between this man and his task as the representative of a nation among other nations. (I have felt this hiatus in most of the men of state whom I have met: a similar incongruity between themselves and their momentous position. In Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico, and in most of Israel's leaders, I did not feel it.)

The replacement of Moshe Sharett by Golda Meir as Foreign Minister suggests a profound decision in the man who is, I suppose, most responsible for it: David Ben-Gurion. The choice is in favor of what this grim mother-in-Israel represents, as against the

conventional values. It seems to state openly that Israel's conduct shall not be as that of other nations; that it shall be distinguished by a greater ruthlessness in service of a profounder ethic. It hints that there may be more than fantasy in my motherland-fatherland antithesis. It is an event that points straight to the man who caused it. . . .

This man, now seventy, by a kind of natural selection has become Israel's archetype leader. What at once struck me, when I met him, was the want of hiatus between him, his task, and his people. For better or worse, in strength and in weakness, they belonged together.

David Ben-Gurion, born in Poland, came to Israel in 1906 and worked as a common laborer in farms and quarries. Joseph Baratz, my host of Degania, knew him in those days. Breaking stones was his daily task. Baratz told me: "He was not one of our best workers. He preferred to take it easy, so he could think and talk. None of us minded, for he thought and he talked so well. We could see he was born to be a leader." He helped found the Histadrut; was exiled by the Turks; practiced Zionist journalism in New York, returning to Palestine when the first War was won. He became head of the Haganah, Israel's nuclear army under the British Mandate; he proclaimed the Republic, and is today Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.

Ben-Gurion is short, stocky, powerfully built. Age has turned a few of his surface muscles into fat—at his jowls, for instance, or his stomach; but one senses that this minimal excess has uses, cushioning his relaxation; that the organs, the nervous system, are still tough and hard. The man is an abbreviated giant. The eyes, whose glint of green has a cold metal keenness, threshold his complexity. For they observe you, yet bar you from observing the thought behind the observation. This one might call a want of candor or of generosity; the man takes more than he gives. But the reserve is the tactics that for forty years has formed him . . . unto his reflex actions. I suspect that a like instinctive calculation is the mark of all political leaders, even on the highest level, as of Lincoln. Ben-Gurion wears at his desk an easeful workman's blouse or a soldier's. But his roughness goes deeper than his dress. He has retained the texture of the common laborer, also instinctively, as an arm of his arsenal . . . even cultivated it while his mind absorbed considerable knowledge of history, of literature, of men. I doubt, however, that Ben-Gurion's studies (he taught himself Greek and recently learned Spanish well enough to read *Don Quixote*, one of his favorite books) are purposive in an obvious sense. He likes to learn and likes the aesthetic fruits of learning. He likes to *live*, and there is more dimension to his living than the present. But I am sure that

he realizes the uses of aesthetic pleasure. He could not make Lenin's mistake of fearing the enjoyment of a Beethoven symphony as a "distraction." Here, his wiser Jewish culture, tinged with humor, serves him—the same *chochmeh* that requires the singing of the Law, the smile in the chronicle of tears, of which Scholem Aleichem was the master. Ben-Gurion is not a fanatic. Yet he is a consciously deliberate man, even in his moments of rest from deliberation. Thinking he makes subservient to action, and action he has made a discipline. Thus, his toughness. He has figured it out as the best policy for dealing with the Arabs and the Powers. If he came to conclude it was no longer the best tool, he would drop it. His is not a metaphysical mind, not a poet's mind. But wait. There is love in his motive, and not self-love. And love is always relevant to beauty. In his cold command of facts for the playing of a studied role, "B-G" (as his compatriots call him) has a practical mind. In his devotion to Israel's survival, he has the mind of a lover.

"We are moving toward war," he said to me. But as he said it, I could feel a certain subtle duplicity . . . not in that he did not believe or fear what he said, but that he was saying it principally to watch the effect of what he said on me. This effect would increase his understanding of the objective situation. This, then, was the duplicity of detachment.

While we talked, Rav Alouf (Major General) Moshe Dayan came in to announce another raid from Egypt's Gaza strip, another loss of Israeli lives. I caught the lightning pain in Ben-Gurion's eyes, before he spoke and covered it. There was love in the pain, then relaxation from pain with return to the ground of methodical decision. I understood, then, the punitive and preventive attack in the Sinai desert. Logic had moved Ben-Gurion to this desperate measure, because love was behind the logic.

As I talked with Ben-Gurion, and as I heard him address the Labor Congress, I was reminded of Winston Churchill. Both men embody and defend a great tradition: Churchill, the aristocrat, the tradition of England's empire; Ben-Gurion, the plebeian, the older aristocracy of the Jewish people, sustained through centuries of exile by a Law and a Prophecy. Both men love what they represent, and have come through a long life to identify self with what they love, and public conduct of self with the achievement of what they love. Both deeply are conservators. The differences are great, between Britain's empire fighting for a continuance of power in order to survive, and Ben-Gurion's nation fighting for a balance of power in order to exist. The moral advantage may be with Israel. Churchill loves Britain's power, feels himself to be its champion, accepts this power as the highest

value. Ben-Gurion loves the life of his folk, governs no less ruthlessly and shrewdly to achieve the power that will let his folk live.

Here is the man's strength, and his peril. For the pursuit of power, even in the cause of love, can generate the love of power. And the love of power brings the destruction of love. What this has meant in England, the dark deeds of its empire from the eighteenth century onward have revealed. What it could mean in Israel, if power—even in the minimal dosage—were to tempt the state, no one can foretell.

These are problems of life strategy. In its present day of immediate mortal threat, Israel is forced to act on the front line of tactics. And Ben-Gurion is Israel's tactical leader, as consummately, it would seem, as Churchill was Britain's tactical leader in its hour of mortal threat.

Whether Ben-Gurion has the perspective of depth to create the lasting *strategy* of Israel's health as an integral part of the Middle East, is another question. . . .

This great strategic problem, which no truce, no peace, no victory or series of overwhelming victories in the field, can solve: there are men in Israel, and there have long been men, aware of it. Possibly there are young men, and from these will come leaders tomorrow. Perhaps in the stringency of

tactical problems, they have not yet emerged. I was not so fortunate as to find them. But there are older men, profoundly conscious: men of great ability, men of fame. Yet they are hardly leaders. At most, the urgent temper of the day salutes them with respect—and passes.

One of these, Judah L. Magnes, is gone. He was a man of high nobility, a man of heart rather than of intellect. He had married the daughter of one of the wealthiest Jewish families in New York, and became the rabbi of the city's most gilded Temple. He gave it up, his social conscience was uneasy. He veered toward orthodoxy, because it meant more contact with the humbler Jews. (I recall my first moving experience of an orthodox "house of study," to which he took me in the lower East Side of Manhattan.) He also defended Russia's new Revolution, not as a sympathizer with communism, but as the champion of a people seeking liberation in its own terms. Finding himself at one with Zionist ideals, he moved to Jerusalem. He became the first president of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. He opposed the British. Before his death he had established a silence around him by his advocacy of a joint Arab-Jewish state.

I recall my talks with him in 1927. He had misgivings about the British in the Mandate, obviously playing politics with the most vicious of the Arab sheikhs; but, above all, about the Jews' neglect

of closer cultural and spiritual relations with the Arabs. One understood the cause of this: the Jews, escaped from the hell of their East-European ghettos, were too busy and too tense to "go out" to the Arabs. But one could also foresee the effects. The specific idea of Magnes for a dual state may never have been feasible. (The analogy with Switzerland is, after all, superficial.) Howsoever, "history," as Martin Buber remarked in this last visit, has eliminated its possibility. When Magnes died in 1948, the Arab armies were invading. The self-exile of the Palestinian Arabs, the vast new immigrations due to Hitler, had rubbed out the axioms of his plan.

I was happy to find Samuel Hugo Bergman still robust and hard at work in Jerusalem. He had been the first Dean, the first Librarian, of the Hebrew University. Now he is making a frontal attack on the prevailing Sabra cult of the normal. If the Jews, he explains, had been a normal nation, they would have vanished when Rome destroyed them. If Israel, on its return to statehood, becomes a normal nation, it must betray its essence and will soon vanish.

"In the long run," Bergman writes, "a purely secular Jewish state would be an absurdity. . . . What the state needs is a religious re-awakening from within, a spiritual revolution for and by faith, which would be ready—as Master Eckhart said—to break the shell for the nut: a Judaism believing

to its deep roots, flowering on the carnal soil of Israel, moved by the hunger of religious truth. Not a reform Judaism, but a Judaism imposing a total reform on life." And he says elsewhere: "The particular character of the Jewish religion is that it is not a religion of the individual, but an alliance of a *people* as a people, with God."

Bergman proposes that the political action of Israel must express its ethics. This is not the code of any normal nation, whose practical ethics is assumed to be the egocentricity of an infant. But the Jews survived through the Diaspora, precisely because they did not imitate the prevailing codes of their overwhelming neighbors. Thus, Bergman, the retiring seventy-four-year-old professor, challenges the tactics of the seventy-year-old Premier. What he is saying is revolutionary indeed: that Israel dare not pursue a tactical course at all at variance with the moral strategy that has kept it alive since Rome tactically destroyed it.

The work of the venerable Martin Buber by its nature is even more remote than Bergman's from immediate political application. His fame as a philosopher of mysticism and as an interpreter of the lore and wisdom of the Hassids is world-wide, and may be said to have reached Israel, although somewhat dimly, since, so far as I could judge, the Israeli intellectuals and writers do not heed him, while the

younger ones do not know him. I had two long talks with Buber in his study, stacked with books to the ceiling, in Talbieh, the same district facing the Judean hills where Golda Meir lives, Buber is a white-bearded man of nearly eighty. In the generation since I last saw him, his body has grown stockier, shorter, and his eyes more luminous. I recall that I found in him then a quality of imperious pride (his provenance is Viennese and German) which did not seem to fit in his collaboration with Franz Rosenzweig, the great German philosopher-saint, and his devotion to the Hassids. The pride has been somewhat absorbed by deep spiritual discipline. Buber was eloquent in his conviction that the Sabras' militant empiricism conceals a groping toward new religious forms; that Israel's struggle to recreate the land is a legitimate "childhood" which, if it is allowed to breathe, will embrace again the destiny of the Jew: an intimate relation with the God of Cosmos.

When the young Sabra faces the metaphysical values that these old men have nourished with their lives, Israel will have matured to a threshold of true birth.

9. THE SECOND PERIL

THIS IS an age of imbalance: trait of a profound transition. Its most obvious form is of course the gap between our physical powers and our wisdom in their use. Less manifest, no less potentially lethal, is the gap between our information and our capacity to absorb it. It results in *a neurosis of forgetting*, whose mask is the illusion that we are well-informed and have *not* forgotten.

Who would admit today that we have forgotten the nature and rise of Nazism, the wanton and unnecessary murder of Spain's young republic, the half century of blood, misery and chaos in China, the blackened fields and towns that are the "peace" we have proudly achieved in Korea?

Who indeed remembers Hitler's satanic effort to annihilate the Jewish people, an effort that *succeeded* against East-European Jewry? Do we keep ourselves *informed* . . . giving the word the organic force of its etymology . . . that the murder of a whole people is no longer an impotent madman's dream? that it has happened? that it can happen again? Spain's twenty-five millions were not wiped out, although their spiritual, moral and cultural health has been attainted beyond reckoning, perhaps subjected to a dangerous mutation. The Jews of Middle and Eastern Europe, with six million exterminated as if they were vermin, their cultural life burned down and blackened to its roots, have also survived in a transplantation that seems miraculous. But the genocidal technics and the genocidal lusts are still present—and have grown since the forgotten days of Hitler.

The peril of annihilation that confronts the makers and dwellers of Israel is the "first peril." What could unleash it? The confused cowardices of the Western Powers, fearing to antagonize the Arab lordlings and to lose the oil whose price the lordlings put in their pockets: the same stagnancy

of will that allowed Hitler's rise and the betrayal of Spain. The power-game of Russia. The impotence of the United Nations, characterized by Secretary Hammerskjold's insistence that Israel's *retaliatory* move against Egypt in Gaza constituted an "aggression" despite the fact that—right or wrong, foolish or wise—it was an act of *defense* against Egypt's many acts of aggression. The Arab thirst for revenge for the 1948 and 1956 humiliations. The confidence of their leaders, which may come, that they can use their superior weapons. The pressure on the Arab demagogues to "make good" their big talk about annihilating Israel. Their need to deflect their people's attention from their misery. The pressure of Egypt's swelling population and the hope (I am sure it is discussed daily in Cairo) that Israel will develop irrigation in the Negev and, when it is completed, Egypt and Saudi Arabia can take it over. Israel's desperate need to amplify its waters by projects which the Arabs have announced as *casus belli*. The grim fact, finally, that the Arabs have something to gain by war, if the Powers permit it. For if war comes, Israel's work of ten decades could be bombed out in ten minutes; whereas an Arab defeat would merely deepen the Arab hate, sharpen the Arab thirst for "another inning," fan the Pan-Islamic nationalist fires. . . .

The "second peril" is contingent on the first, breeds on it, and ironically grows greater as the first

continues to be postponed. It is inward and subtle; and one might ask if it has not, since 1914, or earlier, become universal. It is the peril of an inward demoralization.

A friend . . . devoted and able Israeli . . . spoke to me about it. He lives in one of the large urban centers which, a few years ago, was a cooperative *moshav* and which the high social sense of its dwellers made grow and prosper. A neighbor, who was building himself a new home, found a stack of copper pipes on the outskirts. He appropriated them. Later, they were missed. "Didn't you know," he was reprimanded, "that this material was the State's?" "Oh, but you're wrong," he defended himself. "The pipes belonged to the Arabs."

"Here you have it," my friend said, "an implicit, different standard of conduct toward the 'enemy,' the non-Israeli . . . finally for anyone who is in conflict with our social ego."

We have already noted, in the kibbutz, a self-absorption dangerously egocentric. True, this communal ego is wide and has deep ethical values. Nevertheless, if it becomes obsessed by its own problems, perspective dims, and in a crisis this could be as perilous as blindness. Remember what Yigdal Yadin said about the need of knowing the other side. No one can blame these people, emerging by heroic will-to-live from ghetto and death-chamber, if they are wholly given over to their own tasks of

survival and if by sheer instinct they brush aside the opponent of their tasks. It is not a question of blame, but of constataion of a peril. The survival of the Jew has hinged on his prophetic sense of brotherhood with all men, inclusive of his enemies, under God. His social intelligence flowed from his *aesthetic* of personal relation with the Cosmos. If in his battle to survive, or in his stance of preparedness for battle, he loses this relation, what survives in Palestine will not be Israel . . . not if the name holds its traditional Jewish meaning.

The state of preparedness for war impoverishes the human life it aims to defend.

The population of Israel today is a crowded complex of human experience and motives. It has variant forms: Ashkenazic, Sephardic, orthodox, Hassid, liberal. It spoke some sixty languages, before it learned Hebrew (badly). It reflects the cultures and economies in which the Jews have lived . . . from Yemen to Morocco . . . for ages. It would seem to be the last place on earth to need to fear false simplifications. Yet the enforced attitude of permanent defense against war is a simplification which can be culturally deadly. It can become a trait of the quest for the normal. It can produce a psychology of the armed camp, a distrust of the freedom of organic growth as too groping, too fragile, too uncertain for safety.

Do not forget that the present richness of Israeli

life, from the magnificent Technion on Mount Carmel to the humblest kibbutz, is the product of earlier nurtures—in Europe, in America, in Palestine, before the Jews had become an embattled nation. They were threatened, but their response to danger was not mechanical, not a regimentation achieved by the impoverishment of responses. The intricacies of the Talmud were “the Fence around the Law” which the Fathers recommended. (This is of course a phase of a universal problem. America faces it too; in its defense against freedom’s foes, it risks losing the spirit and the appetite of freedom.)

A corollary trait in the Israelis, kin to self-absorption, is arrogance. Again, who can blame? They have been victims of the violence, the betrayals, of a Europe calling itself Christian. They have survived the Germans, the British and the Arab armies. They look upon themselves, astonished by a prowess more conceivable to the Cabala than in reason. Arrogance is a trait of youth, companion of ignorance and aspiration. Since youth is normally protected, arrogance is venial. And Israel is youthful. But it is also perilously exposed. It needs its eyes. Arrogance excludes inward and outward perspective. Want of perspective breeds arrogance.

The urgency of their situation kept the Zionists, as now the Sabras, from seeking deep contacts with the Arab world. Even if they had been more sensi-

tized to the Arab in Mandate days, I feel quite certain that Arab nationalism and Arab demagoguery would have prevailed. But the Israelis' *inward* attitude would have been better equipment to meet this situation. The danger of arrogance is oversimplification. I felt it continuously in Israel, when the Arabs were discussed.

Young nations, like children, are always narcissistic. Love of their limbs and organs is a function of the toughness their fragility requires. Young America was narcissistic. Witness the outraged and disgusted Dickens who, on his first visit, might have forgiven our ubiquitous spitting, even our pigs rooting garbage in the streets of New York, if it had not been for American arrogance. The Russia I visited in the early nineteen-thirties lived in a euphoria of self-love. André Gide's story of the young Muscovite's refusal to believe that Paris or London or New York had a subway equal to Moscow's, is typical of what I encountered among intellectuals and youths. But compare the position of continental America in 1840, defended from the world's aggression by vastness, distance and the British Navy; compare the position of Russia in 1920, surrounded by foes, it is true, but fortified by the manoeuvrable spaces of half a globe from the steppes to the Pacific—compare them with Israel's slice of earth and minuscule population.

If self-absorption, arrogance are "children's dis-

eases" of nations, can Israel afford them? Must it not function at once on the levels of both childhood and maturity? And where do they converge except in terms of the eternal? And how does this meet the need of being normal? The universal, of course, metaphysically, is a Norm. But a man may know his relation with Cosmic and yet, through the very depth this gives him of relation to men, feel and be isolated on the surfaces of human intercourse. He must link his cosmic connection with the social. Otherwise, saint or martyr perhaps, he will perish. The first duty of the state is not to perish.

By some such linkage of the social and the cosmic, Israel can survive. . . .

TWO: FORCES

10. THE VARIANT JEW

IT IS EASIER to recognize a Jew than it is to define him. And this should reveal that a difficulty lies in the nature of our definition. Any attempt at description would cause trouble, if we demanded of it a similar scope of meaning. For we recognize, but we can never *cognize*, the real, which has dimensions beyond our instruments (sensory, conceptual) of cognition.

In the case of most objects, we avoid the problem. We are satisfied with our definition of a table, because the table does not force us to consider its metaphysics: we define the table, as we build and use a table, within strictly pragmatic limits. If we hold ourselves to biological terms to include geography, we can define an American or a Korean. But try to go farther: to relate the phenomenon of a man with the cosmos of which he partakes: our trouble begins! Why, then, our perplexities in defining the Jew? Because, unlike the Chinese or the table, he has insisted on his *metaphysical* implications; because, from his earliest chronicles, he has presented himself to his own consciousness, and to the world's, as in direct relation with such indefinable enigmas as Genesis, Cosmos, God, the Right and the Wrong.

Other men, other cultures have of course sought to express these relations—perhaps in subtler terms, with vision at least equally profound. But when a man of India or Germany stated his relation with his native part of earth, he could leave the infinite cosmos out of his reckoning. Therefore, his being an Indian or a German could be defined without involvement of the indefinable mystery of his relation with Cosmos. Even the dullest practicing Jew brought just these mysteries into the minutiae of his conduct and his consciousness; brought them into the spot of earth where God had

revealed the way he must walk; brought them therefore into his self-definition.

The creation of the world, of the heavens and the earth, of the firmament in the midst of the waters, and of the light in the firmament: at once, the Jew linked them to his specific family, to his covenant with God to live in a specific way, and to his destiny, his nature. The lowliest Jew could conceive his conduct and his self only in cosmic terms. And who shall define Cosmos?

It has been commonly said that the Hebrews had no metaphysics. This is true, in the sense that they had no separate metaphysics. Metaphysics was dissolved into their common practice, their consciousness. One cannot touch the salt in the sea; but one cannot swallow a drop of the sea water without tasting the salt. . . .

This is definition enough for our present need. It disqualifies the *concrete* definitions: that the Jews have been a nation, or a church, or the one trying to become the other, or a race, or a tribal culture, or a fossil cult, or a missionary sect for the propagation of a universalist ethic. The organic nature of the Jewish consciousness, at once physical and metaphysical, refutes each abbreviation and overflows it. But within the Jewish phenomenon, of which each Jew partakes, although it transcends him and he may not be individually conscious of it, live the particular men and women, and the

groups of them. And these can be usefully classified and defined in our effort to understand Israel, its drama and its passion.

THE GENETIC JEW

In an essay written long ago,¹ I used the term *inertial Jew* to describe "the Jew who is a Jew because he cannot help it or because he is descended from Jews." I had in mind the definition of "inertial" as Webster puts it: "That property of matter by which it tends when at rest to remain so, and when in motion to continue in motion and in the same straight line or direction, unless acted on by some external force." This class of Jew might also be called "residual," in the sense that his Jewishness is what is left after the departure of all positive cultural or religious energy. *Genetic* is perhaps the better, because less invidious, word.

The type is common in the United States. He has completely freed himself from the 613 Commandments of the Torah although he may be a dutiful observer of the Golden Rule and of the Decalogue. In custom, conduct, values, he is undistinguishable from his gentile neighbors, good and bad. He *happens*, literally, to be Jewish. And in his moments of self-inquiry, the fact strikes him as at best a handicap he can overcome by being a better or more successful citizen than his non-Jewish brother.

¹ In 1926. Reprinted, 1944, in *The Jew in Our Day*.

The Jewish "gene" in this man (I employ a metaphor, of course not to be confused with the biological fact) is latent . . . but it is not dead; it may become again active or re-active in a second or third generation, manifesting itself then in new forms.

The *merely* genetic Jew is to be found, only in liberal societies, where the Jew is not excluded and hence forced to Jewish self-assertion. Social prejudice, however, as in the United States, does not destroy the genetic Jew. His progress, as he puts it, is toward assimilation, although a vague pride, in the shape of a memory of Jewish spiritual greatness, may hold him back from it, against his "better reason." He exploits the civilization of his environs, and, by the intensity of his need to "belong," may add to it in the sense of both refinement and grossness. He will then be more aesthete than the gentile aesthete, more business-like than the gentile businessman, more puritan than the puritan. But these distinctions are no more than the greater momentum of distance he must traverse to overtake his handicap and conform.

THE CULTURE JEW

It is obvious that the Jews before Rome's destruction of the Second Temple (A.D. 70), both in Palestine and abroad, possessed a culture of their own. It was a complete, organic culture. Hebrew had long since become a sacred language (the voice of God

and His Prophets). Jewish communities spoke Aramaic, Greek, Persian or some dialect of Europe. Nevertheless, ethic, economy, intellectual discourse, ritual and ceremony, wove a distinctly Jewish culture-fabric. It survived the birth and the death of Europe's Middle Ages, adapting itself in the North to Yiddish and the Ashkenazic service, in the South to the Sephardic forms, and to Arabic and Spanish. This exiles' culture had vast literatures engrafted upon the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint: the Targum, the Talmuds, the Pseudepigraphia, the apocrypha, the apocalypses, the "Testaments," the Gemara, the Mishna and Midrashim (of both Law and Legend), the Rabbinical Commentaries, the Medieval philosophies, homeletics, poems, Cabalas, Responsa—unto the eighteenth century texts and liturgies of the Hassids. And these literatures increased and multiplied because of their unbroken contacts with the lives of Jewish communities from Africa to the Rhine; with the problems of establishing and preserving a balance in the immensely variant gentile worlds, Christian and Islamic.

The threat to Jewish unity was constant; it was met by constant reassertion and reinterpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant with God and of its *site*: the land of Israel.

The literature, the legends, the singing and dancing prayers, the minutiae of humble practice with their overtones of the Eternal, made a culture.

That it remained intensely alive, its survival in Europe and in Islam prove beyond cavil. But it became a ghetto culture, compressed, ingrown, maniacally self-defensive. It absorbed many of the weaknesses of the "host" civilizations to which it desperately clung, while it proudly held itself aloof. It took on a ghetto pallor, a ghetto shuffle; even its unceasing arrow-words of cosmic longing and vision came to be mumbled, as from a throat half-stifled. But it revealed its vitality by its variant articulations of the timeless within the moment; by its flowerings of human values frequently bequeathed to the gentile world; by its physical fertility despite constant physical threat.

Finally, it proved its aliveness, when the eighteenth century brought all the religious cultures of a still predominantly rural and non-scientific world to crisis. For it re-channeled the released energies of the old doomed culture into new cultural forms.

Most of the six million Jews murdered by Hitler lived within this culture. Those that survived are the present culture Jews. Zionism yesterday, the nation of Israel today, have issued from them. The matrix of the intricate orthodox Jewish way of life, throughout the ages and the lands of the Diaspora, was the idea of Exile. The Law became "a land," and already in the Sayings of the Fathers, even before the Talmuds, it was declared: "Build a

Fence around the Law." During the exile ages, "the land" was "portable." But this could be, because the genius of a people distilled an experience and an essence from an actual place of earth. This could be, also, because the host cultures . . . Christian and Moslem . . . in which the Diaspora Jew survived corroborated the premises of the Jewish culture. Christianity, of course, accepted the Jewish geography of Revelation and in its classic form the Jews' return to Zion. Mohammed built from the same Jewish base, merely reserving for himself the fulfillment of Abraham's Covenant and the prophecy of Moses.

The close and nourishing sustainment of the Jewish culture by the civilizations in which it lived is proved by the different states respectively, in the eighteenth century and onward, of the Jews among the Christians and of the Jews among the Moslems. In the West, the victories of science and the machine undermined the old forms of faith—and orthodox Judaism crumbled. In Europe's East, the industrial-political revolution was delayed or resisted, and Jewry defended its old forms or revived them. In Islam, the new world had not dawned, and Jewry did not change.

In the West, the Enlightenment opened the ghettos, and the idea of assimilation came in. In Europe's East, the idea of Exile as a permanent condition until the mystic Messiah changed it, gave

way to political and socialist Zionism, a secularized form of the redemption by the Messiah. In Islamic Jewry, nothing. . . .

The assimilation movement failed. Germany had its "scientific" anti-Semitism; Russia its Cossack pogroms; France its Dreyfus Case. Rousseau's romantic and naïve brotherhood of man was already waning before the nationalisms which the old Empires bred. When Napoleon¹ suggested Palestine as a Jewish homeland, the "liberated" Jews protested. Led by such men as Moses Mendelssohn (who had translated the Bible into German), they had welcomed Jewry's organic assimilation into Europe (was not its ethic at Europe's heart?) and conceived of the Jews as "apart" only in the sense of an ethical and historical association. Less than a century later, history had changed their mind, but now there was no Napoleon to help them.

Zionism became the answer for the culture Jews who found their exile-culture threatened. It was threatened by persecution and massacre. But it was also threatened by ideas alien to the Jewish culture: the new Western "winds of doctrine." This paradox of Zionism must be understood in order to understand its strength. Its new-built "holy land," its "New Jerusalem," were not the Messiah's,

¹ He said: "Palestine is a land without a people. The Jews are a people without a land. Why not bring them together?"

hence not a part of the orthodox culture; yet Messianism was in it. Its political nationalism was not a form the Jews had taken since Rome broke the Temple. But political statehood and military nationalism were certainly not alien to a culture which extolled the Judges and warlike Priests of Judea, the Maccabees, Bar Kochba. Every lover of the Jewish culture, in practice or in nostalgia only, could find in Zionism some corroboration. And yet Zionism itself offered no guaranty of the continuance of the culture.

The Zionists, predominantly from Eastern Europe, were largely rationalists, empiricists, hostile to the idea of Revelation. They were culture Jews, not because they lived under the canopy of the 613 Commandments, but because they had been bred, and their thoughts formed, in the domain of Judaism. Not sharing Judaism's religious motives, although they were heirs to its religious energy, might they not found a state that diverged from the Jewish culture?

THE IDEOLOGICAL JEW

The ideological Jew is the genetic Jew who has accepted his assimilation in the West, and yet feels homesick. He is cut off from the world of the culture Jew; he has no Hebrew, no Yiddish, no Sephardic Spanish, and the rites and ceremonies of his fathers are alien to him . . . more alien than

those of the Christians, with whom his daily life and his education have made him familiar. He yearns for acceptance of and by the West, the world he lives in and loves. But its pragmatic realities repel him; perhaps the immense discrepancy between its religions and its practice, perhaps its frivolous seriousness in sports, its tolerance of public arts immersed in a medium of commercials, perhaps its economic system. Thus begins in him an intellectual quest. Loyal to what he feels to be the values of the West, he finds them to be values originally Jewish, and that they are honored by the gentile more in the breach than the observance. As a loyal Occidental, he finds himself admiring the Jew. He decides that the Jew was a true parent of Europe's culture. He does not become a practicing Jew. How can he, ignorant of the Jew's language and of the Jewish literatures, lost in their practice of ritual arts and customs which strike him as outlandish? The culture of the Jew is more remote from his life than that of Rome; for he has studied Latin, and in his European journeys . . . each a pilgrimage to history . . . he has been in many churches. A Hassid in a beaver hat and a beard, with curling ear-locks a-swing as he propels his prayers with his whole body, is as far from the ideological Jew's idiom as the bonze of a Buddhist temple. And he knows that the Hassid, if he should look at *him*: a Jew with bare head, beardless, ignor-

ant of the letters of the Bible and the Talmud, would hold him in contempt as an apostate. And yet he and the old Jew have an essence in common, he reminds himself. And the more he suffers in the Western world, the more important it becomes for him to know this essence, for it will redeem that world for him.

The mere idea may suffice: the assertion, repeated *in vacuo*, that the Jewish values of brotherhood under God and of God's covenant with man are the progenitors of Western social justice, Western individualism, Western science (moved by the Biblical idea that God made man master over nature). As he accepts the values, he will feel himself the citizen of his country; as he traces their source, he will feel himself the Jew. Perhaps he will go to a Reform synagogue to hear the Rabbi reassure him. Most probably, he will feel no such need. He carries his religion with him, he is sure: if not in his heart, in his head. The piety of awareness is ritual enough. More intellectually active, he will elaborate the common idea he shares with the old Jew—having got rid of the impedimenta of archaic custom and childish legend that give him a pleasing sense of superiority over the orthodox. The old Jew is so close to Isaiah, he can never see him in perspective. He, the modern man of the Judaic faith, is so well stanced in history's perspective that he can see Isaiah and Thomas Jefferson as practically twins.

A third stage is open to the ideological Jew: he may become a neo-orthodox; he may even follow the dietary laws, although the Hassid's *yarmulke* and beard will still probably be beyond him. This new-old theology is achieved by dissolving Jewish practice into symbols. It matters not really what you eat, but to eat by the Mosaic law puts you in unison with all the children of Moses. Atonement for your sins upon a special day (*Yom Kippur*), sanctified by fasting, may fly in the face of modern psychology, which reveals the masochist element in such atonement; nevertheless, the idea is good: it joins you up in history with your co-religionists. The distinction of these rationalizers from the culture Jew is clear. *He* fulfills the Mosaic laws because of his ineluctable share in the Covenant with God. Unison with other Jews follows; it is organic result, not—as with the “modern”—deliberate purpose.

The ideological Jew may admire what is being born in Israel; he may fervidly defend it; he cannot share it. It is outside him. And most probably, he will distrust it. For him, Judaism is exclusively what he calls “religion.” He has extracted body from it, in order to make of it an ideal essence negotiable in Western life. But in Israel, it seems to be primarily *body* that lives and spawns: the raw stuffs of a nation. Religion in Israel is discounted! Only twenty per cent of the Israelis profess it. And what can this renascent body be, immersed in the

Arab East? Must it not be of the East? And was it not the ideological Jew's premise that Judaism played a major part in creating the civilization of the West? that by right of parenthood and of two thousand years in Europe, Judaism is occidental?

Thus, the ideological Jew may become anti-Zionist. (Witness the virulent bad tempers of the American Council for Judaism.) For him, the solution of the dilemma of being both a citizen of the modern West and a genetic Jew is to distill from Jewishness a set of abstract ethics too ethereal to jar the custom of the country. And here is the State of Israel insisting that Jewishness shall be a way of life, a body of life, a whole living nation! The very premise of the ideological Jew's "arrangement" is threatened.

THE ORGANIC JEW

Perhaps the organic Jew first appears when Moses and Joshua have led the Hebrews to the promised land. The Jew, to be organic, must be established as the tree in its soil. For each element of a culture requires nutriment, and the sum must be a continuum, as in the biological world, of intake and egestion. The Hebrews, when they had hills for their altars, fruits for their sacrifices, a central city for their Temple from which ramified services and knowledge, became the organic Jews. From the beginning, as we have seen, the Jews related their

individual existence with Cosmos, without that loss of identity which comes to most mystics. The land symbolized this experience; even Paradise had a specific locus, whence Adam and Eve were driven in their quest for knowledge. Abraham's voluntary offering of his son, his covenant with Jehovah, the revelation of the Law to Moses and his death in view of the promised land . . . all had a habitation and a name: Mount Moriah, Sinai, Nebo . . . Jewish consciousness always had a palpable form; only thus was it organic. The *Haggada* tells us:

The superiority of man to the other creatures is apparent in the very manner of his creation . . . He is the only one who was created by the hand of God. The rest sprang from the word of God. The body of man is a microcosm, the whole world in miniature, and the world in turn is a reflex of man. The hair upon his head corresponds to the woods of the earth, his tears to a river, his mouth to the ocean. Also the world resembles the ball of his eyes.

During the Babylonian captivity, the Jews hung their harps upon the willows and wept by the waters, because their organic culture, although within them, was deprived by absence. They had their Scribes write down the Books of Moses in scrolls of parchment, to bring the absent closer. They returned and rebuilt their Temple. Persian and Greek threatened the organicity of their culture. Rome seemed to have destroyed it. Then,

captained by such exalted teachers as Jochanan ben Zakkai and Akiba, began the process we have observed: the growth of the cells of Jewish conduct into a body capable of survival and adjustment in the ever-shifting crises of the Exile. The immense Jewish literatures of Babylon, Araby, North Africa, Spain, France, the Italian and German cities, throughout the middle ages, attest to the presence of the organic Jew. Sometimes, they had quasi-independence, economic and social. Always they shared basic values with their hosts, Christian or Moslem (the Koran is packed with Haggadic homilies and legends). Even the ghetto was not destructive. Eloquent proof is the rise of the eighteenth century Hassids. Joy, it had always been taught, was part of the fulfillment of the Commandments. Without song and dance and voices of love, Torah is broken. In the darkest hour, with Jewish blood in the streets, the Sabbath must be festive. The eve of the Day of Atonement, as Agnon describes it in his story *Chemdat*, is a time for Rabelaisian food and drink unto the excess that simulates the excesses of which God is guilty in the infinite variety and vastness of Creation. The Hassids made this joy the heart of their service of God. Joy demands energy. Only an organic way of life could grant it, and it was present even in the nineteenth century ghetto. Witness the testimony of the tales of Scholem Aleichem.

VARIANT AND MUTANT

The reader understands that our classifications are a device for convenience; at best, they proportion trends in the character of individuals or communities. They do not, of course, rival biological groupings. A cat cannot become a tiger, or a wolf; but a genetic Jew may seek to become a culture Jew; a culture Jew, exposed to the corrosions of Western mores, may slide into approximations of genetic or ideological Jew, or perhaps a blend of both.

Thus in America today, genetic Jews in some quarters are desperately striving—through the synagogue, Talmud-Torah school and expensive community buildings—to “reconstruct” a Jewish culture. The product, if anything, will be a cult and a new crop of ideological Jews.

The culture Jew in the Diaspora is doomed. For the basic premises and forms of the specific Jewish culture cannot survive *within* the modern world. The organic Jew, except for his relicts in the East, where Medievalism lingers, no longer exists. Whether he is being reborn, within a new Jewish culture, in Israel, is the question.

Relicts of the organic Jew are numerous there. Coming from North Africa, Yemen, Iraq, or long settled in voluntary ghettos such as Jerusalem's *Mea She'arim*, they are more than half Israel's

population. Nevertheless, they are relicts and mortally wounded. For the world of industrialism, science, the machine, permits no permanent marriage of the forms of their organic life with its own.

This does not mean that a new organic life calling itself Jewish is impossible in the future. It would be the fruit of a radical mutation in both the axiomatic forms of Judaism and in the economic, social, intellectual forms of the society in which and by which it expressed itself. Only then could a fertile marriage of Jew *as Jew* with the world be again consummated. But this, manifestly, could not be in the Diaspora, where the Jew, minority member, may assimilate, conform, perhaps amend, but not transfigure. To a new society in the Diaspora, as in the past, the Jew can make important contributions. But the society would not be Jewish. And what we comprehend by "society" must be a factor of the organic Jew. Only when he has control of the forces and forms of the world he lives in, can he hope to create an organic Jewish culture.

This is, of course, the thesis of the Zionists. I shall never forget Schmarya Levin, striding across Chaim Weizmann's hotel room in New York, exclaiming: "When we are at home again, we shall again have Prophets!" Perhaps Levin was such a prophet. But he was a culture Jew of the Exile, born in Russia. What he expressed was perhaps the

old Jewish dream of a Russian Jew, not the dream of an Israeli.

This is of course, also, the *program* of the Israelis. When one observes what they are actually doing, their reclamation of the land and water, their industries, their agricultural communes, their rejection of all old social forms and the rise among them of new ones charged with the vitality of youth, so that the land's growth seems organic as the growth of a body, one is inclined readily enough to say: "Yes, this is it! the organic Jew in a new form, in a new world!" A view less panoramic, as we have seen, brings questions. . . .

The actual architects of everything today in Israel are the children, not of Israel, but of the Jewish Exile. And as we have seen, these pioneers are the children of the disintegration of organic Jewry. Most of them have discarded the religious forms in which for millenia the Jews lived, and which created and moved these pioneers. What now becomes of the spirit in these forms? the axiomatic Jewish need to *immanentize* God and Cosmos within daily deed? Does the spirit, formless, evaporate? or does it create new forms?

The question converges directly on what I have called Israel's "second peril." What will be the effect of a constant psychology of war and the armed camp? Might it not produce, in the very plasm of

the people, a *mutation* which will divide them, the Israelis, from the essentially Jewish?

We have glanced at the variants of the Jew. They brought changes into Jewish life, but no fundamental mutation. Whatever his practice or his betrayal, the Jew was still recognizably the Jew in the fact of an essential relationship with the motives that created the Jew and preserved him. We were in the realm of variants, not mutants, of a culture-organism sustaining itself through two thousand years of exile, adjusting to it, losing to it, yet constantly reviving its vital resources. Now, with the Exile abolished for the Jew in Israel, is it conceivable that the *Jew* in Israel may be abolished? that the Israeli become a mutant so basic that his relation with the classical Jew will vanish?

This, if it were to be, would in no way detract from the Israeli's right to the land he has virtually created, and made his, with his whole life. (His title to Palestine is infinitely older and deeply more contemporaneous than the Balfour Declaration.) But it would most radically affect the nature of the tie between the Diaspora Jew and the Israeli. When Schmarya Levin so eloquently prophesied for Israel, he was projecting himself: the Russian Jew, born in exile and formed by twenty centuries of exile. This could be what the critics call "pathetic fallacy." The new prophets of Israel, when they

arise from Israel's free soil, from Israel's social and environmental status, could possibly be so far from Levin's projection that the word Jew could no longer bind them and the Diaspora Jew together. The need of turning plowshares into swords in an endemic struggle with the Arab world; who knows what it might do to the Israeli prophet? He might differ as much in genius from his fathers as Sparta came to differ from Athens.

I do not say this is probable. Personally, I don't believe it. But I'm not sure what part in my belief is played by my profound admiration for what the Israelis are doing *now*: literally building a new world under the open menace of an enemy that outnumbers them twenty to one. It is urgent, if only for the sake of the Israelis, to make plain that their life-problem is not as simple as the Zionists would have it. It is not a simple *negation* of Exile, leaving the Jew safe and himself again in the land of Isaiah.¹ It is not a simple question of *defense*—of enough arms and goods—against an external enemy.

The Jews, when in peril, were always able to preserve, to enlarge and to parse that specific consciousness of relationship with Cosmos, which made them Jews. Jewish thought has always been crisis-

¹This is what the philosophy of such excellent men as Ben Halpern boils down to. See his *The American Jew* (Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1956).

thought. There has always been the pool, infinitely profound, of God's presence within man, from which the Jew drew sustenance. And the more he was imperiled, the more he drew from it.

This great resource the Israeli may neglect, for as a child of the empirical modern culture he tends to rely too much on weaker, shallower weapons: dollars, diplomacy, arms. This is his greatest danger. For it inclines him away from man's greatest strength; and it is this strength of *man* which had made the strength of the Jew.

The genius of the Jew, in the words of Micah, is "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." This axiom, to be effective requires that God be *known*, although the idiom of the knowledge change. And for this, God must be *sought*.

Without this axiom, the Jew no longer changes, but ceases.

11. OIL UPON FIRES

FOR THE PROBLEM of Israel, there is no panacea. This perhaps is the one clear approach to it. The problem consists of complex, conflicting, *living* elements which only time and internal change can integrate into a livable balance. These elements must be admitted, not obliterated, to become organic tensions. The explosion into war must be avoided to give time and chance their opportunity.

What are some of these warring elements, which must be modulated, as nuclear energy may be, from destruction to construction? At one or another part of our account, we have touched on them all. . . .

1. The Western Powers, principally Great Britain and France, sustained their Oriental empires through the access and the wealth of the Middle East; and this assumed the submission of the Middle East's inhabitants, the Arabs. Arab oil, which turns most of the wheels of Europe, is merely a final, crucial form of the dependence of Europe, hinged, in its present set-up, upon the dependence of the Arabs. With the decline of the Western Powers, their position has given power to the Arabs. They are being aroused in nationalist and pan-Islamic movements.

2. Their legitimate thirst for freedom, since they have no democratic traditions, is largely exploited by old-fashioned sheikhs or by demagogues who use the power of their countries' wealth and the fanaticism of their people to blackmail the Western Powers. The essence of the Middle East's wealth, in a world still desperately clinging to nineteenth-century political-economic forms, is not oil, but geographical position.

3. The expanding pressures of Communist Russia, heir of its Czarist past, seek a place in this

power chaos. Communism is strengthened by an expansive ideology and by its *de facto* status of enemy to Western "imperialism." The Arabs too have the fanatical ideology of their religion to energize their rise against the West and against alien ideologies. They are also extremely poor (Egypt is the world's most miserable and crowded population); and their discontent is deflected by skillful demagogues for their own ends.

4. Into this cauldron of cross-purposes, the Jews have bodily thrust themselves. Their "Zion," in which they were to find the peace that surpasseth understanding, and mystically to expand it unto all the peoples of the world, has been the cockpit of battle since the Assyrians, the Medes, the Greeks and the Romans.

5. The Jews of Palestine represent no single, simple impulse, but, on the contrary, a complex of drives as mixed as the forces arrayed against them. They have a religion whose premise of a Messianic return to Palestine frontally clashes with the religion of Mohammed. Most of them do not practice the forms of this religion; but its energy moves them toward a secular way of life that relates the Jew in Palestine to the imperial Western powers. Moreover, in the modernity of their politics and science, the Israelis *are* of the West and are suspect, even "bearing gifts." Reason reveals to the Arabs

the benefits of science; racial egoism prompts them to fear its invasiveness, and to accept it only on their own nationalist terms.

6. The emotional and spiritual background of the Zionist movement, which with miraculous success, in a few decades, has made of Palestine a modern Western nation, is unknown to the Arabs or is disregarded. When, as with the Arab intellectuals, it is known, the Zionist solution for Jewry's ages of persecution . . . the ghetto centuries, the Russian pogroms, the final horror of Hitler . . . is passionately rejected. Anti-Semitism, they would say with much truth, is a Christian European problem.

7. The Jews, settled in Palestine, have spontaneously allied themselves with the West. (Today, with the new influx of Oriental Jews who have lived in Islam for a thousand years, this fact is stressed by the State's open assumption that the Oriental Jews can be assimilated into Israel only by being "westernized.") Against Arab hostility, they turn to the West. Against Communist expansion, they turn to the West. More than any other culture, they created the West. Western money has financed their building a Western nation; and their democracy is Western. Wherefore, in Arab eyes, the Jews in their tiny land (festering like a splinter in the Arab flesh) *are* the West; share Arab hate of their Western

allies; share the distrust of the communists and pro-communists among the Arabs. (And these are numerous.)

8. Such facts and motives, infinitely intermingled, grew more embroiled after the Second World War. Hundreds of thousands of dispossessed Jews, survivors of the wrath of Hitler, pleaded the right to settle in what the Balfour Declaration called their legitimate homeland. Britain feared the displeasure of the Arab sheikhs lest it lose them Arab oil, and, to curry favor with the Arab Nationalist leaders, refused to let more homeless Jews pour in. The resentment of the Palestinian Jews rose to fury. It is not to be doubted that if the British after the war had opened the gates, the Jews in Palestine would have welcomed the security and peace of Dominion status. The Arabs would at that time have been powerless to oppose it. The Jews, fighting along with the British, had helped them to win Palestine. Trained in British armies, they now waged a smouldering, desperate war against their teachers. The Haganah observed moderation. Small groups, such as the Irgun and the Sternist terrorists, expressing the Jews' response to Hitler, turned like cornered beasts against the British. Sullenly, the British withdrew from what had become an impossible situation. They were confident they would be called back, when the Arabs, as they foresaw, poured into

the vacuum left by their departure. Instead, the Jews proclaimed a State. They had been ready to become a Dominion, or a part of one. Now, as the Arabs invaded, they had been ready to accept the United Nation plan of Partition, which gave Israel fifty-four per cent of Palestine, west of the Jordan. But the war, as the Jews saw it, erased Partition. "Give us back our young men, killed by the Arab invasions," they said, "and we will go back to Partition." The Armistice, signed in 1949 in Rhodes, found the battle-line crazily twisting through Jerusalem's streets, through a no-man's land at the road to Tel-Aviv, almost reaching the Mediterranean west of Samaria, with a ten-meter strip of the east shore of Lake Tiberias. Israeli soldiers had defended seventy-five per cent of Palestine, and were resolved to keep it. The Armistice terms guaranteed Israel free commerce on its coast, and access to both Suez and the Red Sea. These terms were ignored, since no navy was there to enforce them.

9. A half-million Arabs had fled from Israel during the war, for a number of reasons never mentioned by the Arab orators in the United Nations. They had fled because the Arab leaders urged them over the radio to get out of the way of the invading armies. They had fled, after the first Israeli victories, because they feared for their lives. (Had not the Arabs promised extermination to the Jews? and

would not the Jews seek to be avenged?) And they had fled, in some cases, because aroused Israelis were violent against them. Now the Jewish immigrants poured in; the Arab farms were filled. The war was not over; it was stratified in the psychology of the humiliated Arabs. They refused to discuss the fate of the refugees, who increase and multiply (approaching a million) in the camps of Gaza and Jordan.

10. The Arabs and their partisans insist that the Palestinian Arabs were *driven* from their homes. This justifies what they know to be the impossible demand that all of them return (about 80,000 did return, and at one time Israel agreed to repatriate another 100,000). How do we know, in this clash of statements, where the truth lies? We have the evidence of the recorded radio instructions by Arab army leaders. Far more reliable, we have the common-sense logic of the situation. When the Arab armies came in, grossly outnumbering the Jews . . . came in from the North, the Northeast, the East, the Southeast and the South, what reasonably would have been the response of the Israelis? To meet the invader on every front, in every settlement, and to repulse him. The Palestinian Arabs were everywhere behind the lines: in villages, in cities, in farms. Could the Israelis have spent their precious rare manpower rounding them up, driv-

ing them out, fighting them to expel them? Would they not rather have prayed that the Palestinian Arabs remain where they were, causing no trouble? Surely, they urged them, as they insist they urged them, to stay in their homes and be quiet. They reassured them they would not be molested. When the Arabs went, they were not stopped—obviously. No less obviously, the improvised Israeli armies were too busy to start a war against them.

This, I believe, is a just schema of the present situation. What can we make of it? On the level of individual attitudes and facts, we can make nothing. Each detail, each argument, has its antithesis. The Jews claim Palestine as their ancestral home, and their *one* home (behold what became of them in Germany, where they had lived since the age of Julius Caesar!); but the Arabs claim that they have dwelt in Palestine for the past twelve centuries. The Jews quote the Balfour Declaration; but the Arabs reject Britain's right to have made it. The Jews place on the record the bill-of-sale for every Palestinian acre, until the Arabs made war or left the land to the victors; but the Arabs reply that American dollars also are a form of invasion. Jewish orthodoxy and nationalism collide with Arab orthodoxy and nationalism. The Jews remind the world that they were homeless and landless, because of persecution; whereas the refugee Arabs have a

million square miles in which to settle. The Arabs counter that they are not responsible for the world's treatment of the Jews, and that a man's being homeless does not justify his invading the home of another, no matter how spacious his house with many empty rooms. The West clamors its need of maintaining the Middle East as an open highway for its commerce, a life line for its oil; but Russia puts forth analogous claims; and the Arabs insist that the rights of their nations take precedence over the privilege of obsolescent empires.

On this level of claim and counterclaim, of "right" and "wrong," we are lost in a labyrinth. The one way out is to dig *below* the specific issues, each of which, labyrinth-wise, leads into its opposite; to *tunnel* our way with a human compass to guide us, or to rise *above* the maze. The quarrels of the Middle East have blinded participants and spectators to the basic fact that these lands are inhabited by human beings: by men and women and children! If the world can grow aware of this, it will become aware of the rights of these men and women to live; it will be able to impose this awareness upon all the actors of the conflict; and a start will begin out of the marish and nightmarish maze.

No one questions the Arabs' right to live, and to live in the lands which have become consubstantial to their living. No one must question the Israelis' right to live; and the fact of many decades now, ful-

filling the will of many ages, has made their right to live in Palestine consubstantial with their right to live. The Arabs might blast the Israelis out of their narrow land; this indeed is what their chieftains threaten. Then the Israeli would die. Grant his right to live, and his right to live where he is goes with it.

The right to live transcends ethical judgment; it hinges on the mystery that *one is living*. Let us take an extreme example. A woman, let us say, commits adultery. We (stern and righteous moralists) condemn her sin and call the child that comes of it "a bastard." *We do not deny its right to live*. Now, I am far from suggesting an analogy between the people of Israel and a bastard. The sins of Europe, which calls itself Christian, may be responsible for Israel's existence, although the people of Israel in many aspects, as we have seen, is a "legitimate" offspring, at worst a "natural child" in the family of nations. But what if we agreed with the Arab zealots and called Israel folk a "bastard"? It lives; therefore it has the right to live. Its existence denies the right of existence to no one; therefore that right shall not be denied to it.

This indeed is the official stand of the United Nations, which, however, has so often wavered in implementing its stand that it may said to have betrayed it. When the United Nations fails to insist that the Arab states discuss peace with the state of Israel; when it permits them to blockade Israel's

coast and to deny Israel access to the Suez Canal, etc., it is betraying its recognition of Israel's right to live.

Israel has become, for better or worse, the *form* of the life of two million Jewish men and women. To concede, as most of us do, its right to live and to deny the embodiment of its life is at least as absurd as it would be to grant our hypothetical "bastard" the right to live, merely insisting that he change his body and his face.

If this elementary proposition about Israel is granted and *proclaimed* by the nations of the world, the Arab chieftains will hear and will hearken. The specious antagonism between Israeli and Arab will diminish. The vast majority of Arabs have no contact with Israelis. (Therefore they can be made to believe malevolent fairy-tales about them.) Those that do have contact soon discover its potential benefits. The Middle East's complex problems cannot be swiftly solved. But this existential base for their *confrontation* will at least have been created. A clear note of Israel's *right to be*, sounded in unison by the nations of the world, would bring a change of attitude with the effect of magic.

I do not ignore the impediments to the inauguration of this "magic": the Arab's political immaturity and indifference to democratic measures, his low standard of living compared to the Western

Israeli; his corrupt leaders' investment in his ignorance; the clashes and hurt pride of nationalist egoisms; the head-on collisions of the two orthodoxies; communism's false simplifications and incentives to keep the waters troubled. No panacea can "cure" them overnight. But the voice of a firm world judgment will be heard, and will create even in Cairo an atmosphere in which overt war would be unable to break out again. Supporting the present flimsy Armistice of arms, there would be a psychological truce in which—the longer it lasts—Arab and Israeli will begin again to regard each other as humans, as neighbors, as potential partners in such urgent affairs as irrigation and the exchange of goods and of ideas.

How these collaborations might begin, how proceed, no one perhaps can say. They may be at first quite informal. They may spread beyond the carapace of the official hostility which of course will last long; and subtly, gradually corrode it, before officialdom grows conscious of a change. The creative acts of man are always initially obscure, because we insist on looking for them in the one form they never take: the form of the creative acts of yesterday. This applies to art, to religion, to economics—and to politics.

The "incompatibility" of Arab and Jew has been induced by the confusions we have noted and by

the charges of will—like lightning in thunderclouds—within them. It is substantially nonsense—but nonsense can commit murder. The Arab, intelligent, flexible, swift, leaped from the desert that absorbed him into dynamic Islam; sank into stagnation—and is on the move again. How he moves in the next decade depends on the pressures of the world.

He could move into communism. As I had occasion to point out long ago,¹ there are deep analogies between early Islam and Russian communism. If world conditions that favored communism in Russia and in China remain, the Arab response to them might take an analogous form. Not identical. Islamic communism would not be tempered and transformed, as it indubitably will be in Russia by the deep orthodox Christian tradition; in China by the momentum of two millenia of Confucius. Arab communism would have a Bedouin ferocity.

The Israelis' clear advantage in the present struggle is that they do not desire, nor does their program incur, the death of the Arabs. Their presence in Palestine calls for many adjustments (the plight of the Arab refugees is the extreme instance); but it need not hinder the health and happiness of a single Arab. On the contrary, their skills, industrial, political, scientific, can be of great value to their

¹ In *Dawn in Russia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932).

neighbors. They are hated by the Arab sheikhs for their virtues and because of the threat of their noble social institutions. For these same reasons the Arab peoples may learn to love them and to profit by them.

To this end, which would be an organic beginning, both the Israelis and the West must shift their positions. The West must prove that its democracy, and its championing democracy abroad, are real. Israel must prove that it is not a satellite of any colonizing or exploiting power. It must argue for its existence on less legalistic terms than the dubious Balfour Declaration. Although ready to defend its life at any hour with arms, it must lean less on its victory of 1948 for the establishment of its frontiers. It can learn a salutary lesson from Antonio José de Sucre, Bolivar's great general, and the victor of Ayacucho, the battle which broke Spain's power in America. Sucre, when he defeated his enemy, shaped his terms, not on the premise of what his victory made it possible for him to do, but on the premise of establishing the justice which his enemy had threatened. Justice, not the 1948 Armistice, should mark Israel's boundaries. Israel should have the lands of Palestine because it needs them, and vast Araby does not. But Israel should be ready to make concessions.

It has already offered Haifa as a free port for the use of Syria and Jordan. It would probably agree

to ensure Egypt some form of passage to the Arab hinterland through the Negev. I think it could most profitably allow the internationalization of Nazareth and of Old Jerusalem. This would injure the Israelis in their nationalist pride. But it would incarnate the concept of Israel as a people dedicated to the service of the whole brotherhood of man. It would make of these two cities, sacred to half the world, an active symbol of the vision of the Prophets. They would become, in themselves, a prophecy and a birth of fulfillment.¹

But all this . . . so urgent and so possible! . . . cannot begin to be, until Israel's *right to be* is effectively acknowledged. Does the world owe less to Israel? Does it owe less to itself?

¹ The new city of Jerusalem, outside the walls, is obviously an Israeli city, hardly a half-century old. The internationalization of the two ancient, internationally sacred cities, both inhabited by Arabs, might be the start of a process which would be expedited if the United States agreed to the internationalization of the Panama Canal, provided Egypt followed with Suez.

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12. THE LADDER, THE ANGEL, AND THE THIGH

IN GENESIS, 28, we read:

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon the place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending

and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood beside him, and said: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee back into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." And he was afraid and he said: "How full of awe is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Swiftly the chronicle proceeds. Jacob at the well meets and loves Rachel, younger daughter of Laban, his mother's brother; and Jacob serves Laban seven years for Rachel's hand. Laban then cheats him, giving him, under cover of the dark bridal night, the elder weak-eyed Leah in lieu of Rachel. Jacob must serve Laban another "week of years" for Rachel. At long last, with his two wives, his concubines, his eleven children, his thousands of sheep and kine, Jacob sets forth to return to the land that God has promised him. Esau, who hates him, is reported on the way to meet him; and Jacob, who tricked Esau out of their father's blessing,

fears his brother. Sore afraid, he divides his company in two parts and sends them all . . . man, woman, child and beast . . . over the ford of the brook Jabbok:

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he (the man) saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he (the man) said: "Let me go for the day breaketh." And he (Jacob) said: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." And he (the man) said unto him: "What is thy name?" And he said: "Jacob." And he said: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." And Jacob asked him, and said: "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." And he said: "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (the Face of God): "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped upon his thigh. . . . (Genesis, 32)

It is episodes of this apparently arbitrary nature that inspired the mountains of volumes of commentary, to explain them. To the Jews of all ages and of all kinds, from legalist to mystic, the Biblical text . . . each syllable and letter . . . was the writing of God. Obviously God meant more than he put down. To us, the Biblical text is a latter-day compilation by the Scribes (sopherim) of the Second

Commonwealth under Ezra and Nehemiah; an editing from manuscripts and oral tradition, already centuries old, describing events more remote in time from the writers than Chaucer is from us. If these authors with their hindsight described what has already happened as prophecies of events about to happen, they were guilty only of the usual mystifications of a priesthood. But such obvious manipulation of a past into a future that is already past does not explain episodes like those quoted above. Here we are in the presence of intuition; of the same stuffs as dream and revelation. Modern psychology has not made the Bible stories invalid, nor their interpretation by the Talmudists, Cabalists and Rabbis; it has merely modified the terms of their authenticity.

Thus, Jacob's pillow stone, which becomes the cornerstone of the Temple, symbolizes the growth from meditating on a dream to its organization and corruption. Jacob's vision of the ladder reaching up to heaven, on which the angels ascend and descend, is a succinct symbol of the nature of Judaism. The ladder, in the Jews' semantics, is prayer by which man climbs toward God. Prayer connotes altar, whence the idea of Temple. Moreover, the Hebrew word for ladder: *sulam*, has the same numerical letter-value as *Sinai*, the mountain on which Moses receives the word of Jehovah and the Law.

Note that the angels are both ascending and

descending this ladder. Prayer is a two-way conduit. Man aspires, but also heaven inspires. Man strives toward God; God strives through man. Here, in a metaphor, we have the immanence of God on earth and in man, and contrapuntally the transcendence of man toward God: we have the unique blend which explains the individuality of our Western ethos: The terrestrial state which the Messiah shall transfigure, the cosmic God who becomes the human life of Jesus drawing all men to follow him in action, the bestowal of the forces of nature upon man that he may perfect methods to understand them and to build his city with them . . . all the basic attitudes of the modern world toward science and toward social justice are within the myth of Jacob's ladder, as the oak within the acorn.

The episode of the wrestle of Jacob and "a man until the breaking of the day" is a seed even more wonderfully pregnant. The text tells us nothing about this "man" who refuses to give his name. But by his authority to change Jacob's name to Israel he is assumed by the commentators to be an angel of God; and by wrestling with him, Jacob has "striven with God and with men." His new name means, in Hebrew, "he who striveth with God," and the angel says he has prevailed! This is conceivable only on the implicit premise that something of God is in the man: again, the counterpoint of immanence and transcendence.

According to the interpreters, the angel aims "to exterminate" Jacob, and is assumed to be "the heavenly prince of Esau," the brother who hates Jacob for cause. "I cannot kill you," the commentary goes on, "but I shall hurt you." Jacob, who strives with God—and with the Gentile, personified by Essau—is wounded in his thigh. The Hebrew word for thigh, *yerech*, is also the word for the loins. And from the loins of man issue the generations. Which is to say, that because they strive with God the progeny of Jacob shall be hurt and shall suffer. The same counterpoint is here, as in the angels ascending and descending the ladder that binds heaven and earth together: The action of the immanence of the divine in nature and in man is a struggle (and an embrace) that wounds man. The Christians drew from this tension the Platonic concept that God too is wounded. The Jews, armed against such ultimate logic, made God infinitely near yet hold Him infinitely remote.

These arbitrary anecdotes, thrust without explanation and, it would seem, without cause into the family chronicle of the old Patriarch, are dreams of the unconscious of the people. Call them psychological portraiture; call them prophecy; or call them, after the Cabalists, a signature of Jewish destiny. It matters little. The fact is that the preoccupation of the Hebrews and the Jews with a

method for enacting God's immanence in history and in nature, has meant a continuous striving . . . flesh to flesh, muscle against muscle . . . with both the energy of God which infuses man and with the creaturely inertias of the body. The paradox of the dream is its enormous truth: Israel strives with God because God is in him; and Israel strives with God because he is mortal, erring flesh. Israel "prevails," because he is of God; and because he is a creature and impure, Israel is injured forever in his generations.

To modulate the key from Israel to man, and from the obscure Biblical text to all human history, is irresistible. The history of the Jews compels this modulation. The understanding of the Jews, and of the West, compels it.

If we carry with us the similitudes of these parables; more precisely, if we let them *carry us* (like the "chariot" which the Cabala likens to similitude and symbol), we shall reach perhaps a view of the meanings of the "impossible" small nation that lives upon the land where a man saw the ladder (within him) which leads from his earth to the truth; and wrestled to bring the truth "down"—prevailing but forever wounded.

13. SUNSET ON THE ACROPOLIS

AFTER the high tension of Israel, it was restful to spend a few days in Greece.

One mid-afternoon, with the sun's glare on stone already abating and decomposing into tint and shadow, a learned friend led me up to the Acropolis. We left the Theater of Dionysios, made massive and vulgar by its Roman reconstruction; paying our respect (or lack of it) to the Emperor's marble

seat in the front row; and proceeded up the broad, stone Roman stairs which master the hill (the ancient Greeks were content with a dirt path). We passed through the portico of the Propylaea, where perhaps Pericles and (later) Aristotle argued; skirted the jewel-box temple of *Niké*, the Erechtheum with its caryatids almost intact and its capitals mellifluous as music; and climbed up to the Parthenon. Wandering through its immense columns, we noted their exquisite curving dissonances from mathematical order, giving to the massiveness of each a subtle motion, and making the whole structure delicately breathe.

We looked down on Piraeus, whose wall ran to Athens, and its three harbors; seeing beyond it Salamis where the Greeks broke the Persians, Eleusis whose Mysteries tutored Saint Paul, and the blue Aegean.

My sensitive friend said to me: "I shall leave you here . . . alone."

I remained on the Acropolis alone, until the innumerable stones, rising above the verdure of the view like jets of flame, subsided; until the lucid sapphire waters of the bays and the Aegean grew gray, and the sun vanished. As the dusk gathered below me, and the light of day retreated, the marbles of the ruined temples gave their message, with

the authority and awe of the last words of the dying.

They spoke of a harmony of strength and agile lightness. It flowered, not because the Greeks were careless, privileged children, but because of the deliberate way in which they confronted darkness and death. Here it is everywhere: this death and the dark terror of life, which the Greeks knew, in the overwhelming chaos of nature. They acknowledged it, but they opposed it. The stones of their opposition to death, of their yea-saying to man's order and to his possible grace within life's chaos, stood all about me. Stood in ruins. But the spirit of these stones was also there, and free, and victorious over the ruins.

No less than the ancient Hebrew, the Greek had felt the wrath of the destiny of the flesh, which is fragile as grass. The Hebrew met the tragic mystery of man's existence with a Covenant, linking him with the eternal; a Covenant which grew into Law. And if man knowingly obeyed this law, he was gathered up into the Cosmos which he knew as God—the God who fulfilled the justice of nature, which is cruel, with the mercy which is love. The Greeks had a different method.

They saw a light upon the land and sea. And they saw a light within themselves. Its outer source

they called the sun. Its inward being they called Reason. They made a God of this manifold light, and relied on it to penetrate the terrors of nature symbolized by the lesser gods, the dark of men's souls manifest by their deeds. The light and balance of reason, whose home was in man and whose theater of activity was nature . . . this was the Greek equivalent of the mercy with which Jehovah tempered justice.

From the Jewish method of confronting the dark terror of human existence rose the revelation that each man has God within him (this, the *alpha* and *omega* of the message of Jesus); the revelation that by enacting God's laws he can make life good; the revelation that man in his search for the good may explore nature and control it. From the Greek method of reason rose the measure by which scrutiny and experiment explore; and the arts as ritual of man's tragic place and triumph within the chaos of nature. From the marriage of both methods was born Christianity and Europe.

From the Acropolis I saw not only the long shattering age since Greece shone and was unified by light; also I looked down on modern Athens.

For a millenium and a half, Athens was an insignificant town. When Greece won final independence from the Turks in 1833, Athens was hardly

more than a cluster of huts on the Acropolis hill—huts of wood or of broken shards of marble gathered from the temples which the endless wars had blown to pieces. The Parthenon under the Turks became a mosque; the Erechtheum, a harem of a Turk commander. The friezes and sculptured capitals, when not exploded by gunpowder, were pilfered and carried away to London (the Elgin marbles) and to other European cities. The luminous colors of the columns and pediments had long since drowned in the rains, when the temple ceilings crumbled.

The Athens I saw (with the light of ancient Greece, surviving the sunset) was a nineteenth century city, a modern city, a noisy disheveled imitation of Paris. The reason of the Acropolis was not in it. It represented rather the capitalist culture (or is it anti-culture?) of modern Europe; not the great Europe born of Greece and Israel, but the degenerate offspring which has lost both the Hebrew sense of man's covenant with God and the Greek reason of poise and grace in the discovery and the control of nature. I found one lovely edifice in Athens; a tiny Orthodox church, centuries old. It is next to the new huge banal Cathedral, and they both face the disordered strident marketplace. This is a symbol. There is little continuity between the scattered stones of the Acropolis, Eleusis, Corinth, which still hold light, or between

the Light of the Byzantine church, and modern Athens.

With another learned friend, I drove through Attica to Corinth. We met the Greek peasant, sweet and generous, but fearful because of the wars that have been his daily bread. He is a stranger to the vulgar spirit of modern Athens; but he has lost touch with his own genius, and with the gods of Eleusis and with the energy that built the ancient temples. The God of light beyond the gods of chaos, whom the Greeks knew, still lives in the airs above the Aegean islands. The Greek peasant, although he knows that he exists, has lost him.

In Israel, the sons of ancient Jews struggle to restate, and in modern terms to live, the Covenant with God, which, by creating an ethical commonwealth of justice and love, shall redeem the terror of existence. In Greece the continuity with ancient Attica has been shattered and the modern city marks that break, and also the falsity of the modern kingdom's attempt to recreate it.

This Athens also is more than itself. The whole Western world has lost the Greek sense of measure and of grace. Our vaunted science, uncontrolled except by the lusts of fear and power and commerce, without the Reason and the Revelation that

first mothered it, becomes an insolent and murderous monster; earning the fearful hate of the whole world—despite the gifts it bears; and prepares to murder itself, despite its life-giving secrets. Our arts, unnurtured by the Greek instinct of man's responsibility to reason, become the whores of our passions.

It is night now. In this dark, I pass again down the Propylaea, down the broad stone stair of the Romans . . . pass the gross coliseum built by them in what was once the vital theater of Dionysos . . . back to the modern Athens which reminds me how our modern world betrays its noblest birthright. But does not the betrayal prove that the birthright is still valid? not yet realized but acknowledged! Is it not more truthful to read in the chaos of our times the immediacy of the impulse which created Greece and Judea as forms of itself which had to vanish in order to rise in greater forms? The measured light of Greece rises in quest of a profounder measure, a deeper light. The passion of Israel rises as symbol of a more complex life within envioning death. We are still the contemporaries of our struggling fathers; and if their blood stains us, also it sustains us.

